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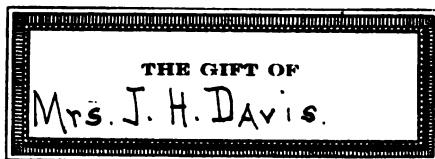
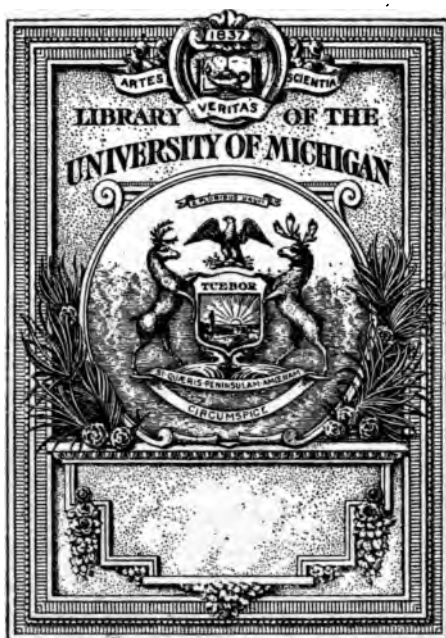
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**A DEVOTIONAL COMMENTARY**  
**ON THE**  
**GOSPEL OF ST. JOHN**

**BY**  
**McVEIGH HARRISON, O. H. C.**

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**ARRANGED FOR DAILY MEDITATIONS,  
OR SPIRITUAL READINGS,  
FROM ADVENT SUNDAY TO THE  
END OF WHITSUNTIDE**

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**By McVEIGH HARRISON, O.H.C.**  
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## PREFACE

**T**HIS small volume might have been called "The Divine Charity," for the love of Jesus Christ for us is its subject throughout. One who follows St. John at all, I find, cannot choose but adopt this theme, for it recurs in some form or application not only in every chapter of his Gospel, but in many individual words and phrases, the selection of which must have been the care of his long lifetime.

The title I have actually chosen is simply the most accurate I could think of. For the past two years I have been trying to follow out the main lines of our Blessed Saviour's Life and teaching as the Apostle of Love has revealed them to us, and then to use these for my own meditations and for conferences and retreats. I wish it were true to say that I have been living in the atmosphere of the Fourth Gospel, which is really only the true atmosphere of the Religious Life, and which would be the best preparation for writing these pages. But in spite of the many imperfections of my study, it has disclosed so much that was wonderfully helpful in the Sacred Text, that I determined to draft the material in my note-books into the form of brief, expository meditations or readings. For my experience with people who are practising regular mental prayer has

indicated that it would be helpful for them if they could take for the "matter" of their meditations a particular Gospel and follow it through. Few, however, can spare time to work out the exegesis of a passage daily, or even to read a chapter explaining it, and to these busy folk my humble offering is made. It is a "commentary" on the Gospel of St. John, only in the sense that it presents in substance the interpretation, by great scholars, ancient and modern, of the Beloved Disciple's revelation of our Lord. Many particular verses are not noticed, but, on the other hand, [no difficult text is left without the explanation which has satisfied me.

My obligations are manifold; but apart from my great debt to the Fathers, I owe most to Bishop Westcott and Dr. Plummer for their Commentaries. To Rev. Dr. G. H. Morrison I am grateful for some very suggestive sermons on texts from the writings of St. John.

MCVEIGH HARRISON, O. H. C.

St Andrew's Day, 1919.

## CONTENTS

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CITATIONS	PAGE
St. John i: 1-14 .....	1
St. John i: 15-36 .....	13
St. John i: 37-44 .....	25
St. John i: 45-51 .....	34
St. John ii: 1-11 .....	45
St. John ii: 12-25 .....	57
St. John iii: 1-15 .....	68
St. John iii: 16-36 .....	75
St. John iv: 1-42 .....	83
St. John iv: 43-v: 20 .....	92
St. John v: 21-47 .....	101
St. John vi: 1-23 .....	106
St. John vi: 24-71 .....	110
St. John vii .....	119
St. John viii .....	127
St. John ix .....	136
St. John x .....	144
St. John xi: 1-52 .....	155
St. John xi: 53-xii .....	162
St. John xiii .....	172
St. John xiv .....	181
St. John xv .....	191
St. John xvi .....	202
St. John xvii .....	215
St. John xx .....	234
St. John xxi .....	251

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

**A. V.**==Authorized (King James') Version.

**A V. Marg.**=="Marginal Readings" edition of the Authorized Version.

**R. V.**==Revised Version, Oxford edition.

**R. V. Marg.**==marginal reading of the Revised Version.

**f.**==the next verse in addition to the one cited.

**ff.**==the next two verses in addition to the one cited.

Single quotation marks ( ' ' ) indicate a literal translation, unless explained in the text as inclosing a paraphrase.

All citations are inclusive of the last verse cited.



# SAINT JOHN

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**The First Week in Advent.**

**Read St. John i: 1-14**

## **Advent Sunday**

### **God's Love Stoops to the Incarnation**

The Beloved Disciple has for the supreme motive of his Gospel to tell us how Jesus Christ revealed His Deity. Only second to this is his purpose to teach us God's love for us and to win our full response. Therefore, in his Prologue, he sets forth the infinite Charity which brought God to take upon Him His creatures' nature. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then, "the Word was made Flesh." Even in the very beginning when the universe was made by the Word of God, He *was*, from all eternity (Gen. i: 3, 6, 9, etc.). Yet He accepted birth of a woman. He united to Himself a Manhood which was subject to the limitations of time and space, which could grow weary, and suffer and die. How infinite, how almighty, must be that Love of God which made Him willing to become a Little Baby!

Moreover, St. John brings before us a second great paradox of this ineffable charity, when he says that "the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt," or, literally, "tabernacled," "among us." For in this he identifies the Word with the Jehovah of the Old Covenant, Who

"tabernacled" with His ancient people in the Tent of Meeting, and afterwards, in their Sanctuary (Exodus xiv: 24; xl: 34; 1 Kings viii: 11). But how incomparably more tender was it when this same dear God came and "tabernacled" among us, not in a Pillar of Fire and Cloud, but in our own Human Nature, to reveal Divine Wisdom to us with Human Lips, and to love us with a Human Heart!

Finally, He Who *was* "in the beginning" *was made* Man. Is it not unspeakably wonderful that He Whose Life is immutable should have condescended to accept a nature subject to the processes of change? He Who is "the same yesterday, to-day and forever" submitted to become Flesh in order that He might know by experience all the vicissitudes of our human life, from first to last. Surely God could not have challenged us, in more compelling ways, to respond to His love.



### **The First Monday in Advent**

#### **The Witnesses to Christ**

The Fourth Gospel opens with the most explicit and extended teaching in the Holy Scriptures that Christ is God, and it reaches a climax in St. Thomas' confession of the Risen Jesus: "My Lord and my God" (xx: 28). On the other hand, none of the first three Gospels is so explicit in displaying the limitations of our Saviour's Manhood; and St. John is unique, apart from St. Paul, in sometimes referring to our Lord by the Greek word for "man" which indicates a poor peasant rather than by that which suggests a gentleman. His two great, fundamental truths, about Christ, therefore, are: that He is "God, Only-begotten," and that

He is the "Son of Man" (i: 18 A. V. Marg.; i: 51). The Apostle of Love would have us understand that God has had part and lot with all of us ordinary folk. In riches, social standing and temporal power, He deliberately chose to share the fortunes of the lowly.

There was less need to urge the reality of Christ's Manhood than to insist upon His Deity. For this latter, St. John sets forth seven proofs, being the witness to Christ: (1) of the Father, (2) of Jesus Himself, (3) of His miracles, (4) of the Old Testament, (5) of St. John Baptist, (6) of the disciples, and (7) of the Holy Ghost (v: 37; viii: 14; v: 36; v: 39 f.; i: 7; xv: 27; xv: 26). Thus the Apostle of Love was theological, definite and dogmatic in asserting the true Faith. There is a widespread impression in our day that love must be tolerant of error, even about our Lord, and amiably willing to dilute the truth until our weaker brethren can receive it. But true charity towards Jesus and our fellowmen dictates that we hold the Catholic Faith pure as He committed it to us for them, an inviolable trust.

It is profoundly impressive that such a Gospel, having for its principal purpose to defend the truth of our Lord's Dual Nature, should have been written by the last of the Apostles. For sixty years he had endured the trials, sufferings and dangers which beset the Apostolic Church. One might have thought that sad experience would have dimmed his faith, either in the Godhead of Christ with its attribute of almighty Power to defend His people, or else in the reality of His Manhood and of the human experience which would fill Him with pity for them. But this aged prisoner of state, fresh from the stone quarries of Patmos, surrounded by the apparently unconquerable forces of

evil in Ephesus, proclaims his faith in the God-Man with absolute certainty. He has learned cumulatively, by the triumphs of three-score years, that no darkness, however deep, can overcome the Light of Life (i: 5). It "shineth" with but greater radiance of power and love, amid gloom, be it the gloom of First Century Asia Minor or that of Twentieth Century America.



### **The First Tuesday in Advent**

#### **THE Fourth Gospel Especially for Modern Christians**

The Light from the Word is ever coming to the Church in greater volume and radiance, so that a later generation is able to understand the original deposit of truth in the Holy Scriptures better, and to discern in it new relations to men and things. Thus, St. John, writing his Gospel in 95 A.D., saw that the world of his day and of the future demanded a presentation of our Lord's life and teaching which would in ways be different from the treatment of the three older Evangelists. Therefore, he records no miracles of Christ except those which all generations would value supremely as proving the power of the Master over their very own times and conditions. He gives us no account of the many miracles wrought by Jesus for the cure of lepers and those possessed with evil spirits. From his prophet's watch-tower, looking out over the coming ages, he foresaw that there would be few demoniacs or lepers in those western lands into which the Gospel was so rapidly advancing. But there would be poverty, disease, hunger, storm winds, blindness and death, and, therefore, he tells us of the way in which the God-Man showed His supreme Power over every one of these

destructive forces. For, as we can see by looking rapidly through his Gospel, he records seven miracles wherein our Lord relieved His people from these universal evils.

Again, it is a notable vice in our modern religious practice, that we are disposed to regard all righteousness as external and as consisting entirely in right conduct and good works. Now St. John would teach us that the spiritual life is primarily interior and hidden. For he discloses to us our Lord's motives and plans, the dependence of His Human Heart upon His Father, and His craving love of men. He had lain upon the Lord's Breast and learned heavenly secrets from the very Soul of his Master. Rightly, therefore, his Gospel is called "The History of the Inner Life of Jesus Christ." And through it he would bring home to us the ancient truth that "what we do springs from what we are."

Finally, the Church to-day seems to be facing a very gloomy future. There are traitors within her and assailants without. The last of the Apostles has much comfort for us in this discouraging situation. For, in a passage which the great interpreters attribute to him, as his comment on Church conditions in A.D. 95, he tells us that 'no man was receiving the testimony of Christ' (iii:32). "The whole world," as he declares elsewhere, "lieth in the Evil One" (1 St. John v: 19). It has been truly said that "the close of the apostolic age was a period of singular darkness and hopelessness." But in spite of the fact that Christians were refusing to receive the Gospel, and that there was even less decency in that Ephesian world than there is in the American world of to-day, the Fourth Gospel is the most hopeful and joyful of all. Let us then, like

St. John, be invincible optimists, relying upon Him who said that the gates of Hell should not prevail against His Church.



### **The First Wednesday in Advent**

#### **The Incarnation is of Supreme Value**

St. John alone among the Evangelists begins his Gospel with a summary of our Lord's Incarnate Life, rather than with His Nativity. Even in the three earlier Gospels, however, and in the Epistles, it is astonishing how little space Christ's Birth occupies, when we consider how lovely and appealing it is. We would have thought that many long chapters and probably whole Epistles would have been devoted to descriptions of the dear God lying in the cave with the cattle, His Hands, which had hung out the Stars, now playing with a little straw. But, in fact, even our Lord Himself never referred explicitly to His Birth, nor would He say that He was born in the City of David even when challenged to do so. And, at the end of the first Christian century, when St. John wrote, it had become true, all the more, that the thing which seemed to Christians to be of supreme importance was not the Divine Baby in the manger, but God Incarnate. The beginning in time of His Human Life was but one supereminently luminous point in the glorious eternity of His Being. Let us never so lose ourselves in the sweetness and pathos of the Christmas Crib, that we fail to see in Him Who lies there Emmanuel, God with us.

It is this gift of the eternally preëxistent Christ which is the unparalleled proof of Perfect Love. To

this sacrifice of God's Own and His All, we owe that certainty of His Providence which can bear us up in our suffering. Once it seemed obvious on the face of the visible order that we men were the favorite creatures of God. We supposed that our earth was the center of the solar system. The countless orbs of Heaven were thought to revolve about us and were principally for the welfare of our race. But modern astronomy has revealed that there are four thousand million suns as large as ours, or larger. This world is only an atom of dust on the outskirts of creation. If it were not that God has sought out our tiny, dark, cold, earth, and taken our nature upon Him forever, we could not be sure of His love at the very times we need Him most.

But it is equally true that, in our prosperity, the great spiritual uplift which alone can save us from materialism is the life of the God-Man. The passenger on one of our Eastern railways sees an allegory of this truth, as arresting as if some modern Jeremiah had placed it there. For, as he speeds along, he meets a procession of huge bill-boards, boasting of all manner of things for men's comfort and enjoyment. And there, marching bravely in the midst, as if hoping to redeem and transfigure all the rest, is one bearing upon it in great letters the glorious boast of the Church: "Jesus Christ is God." So must we stand, amid the passing show of all this world's joys, fearlessly proclaiming Incarnate God as the one only Glory of man's life.

## **The First Thursday in Advent**

### **God the Eternal Suffer**

Jesus "came unto His own [home] and His own [people] received Him not." In these few pathetic words, the Beloved Disciple begins his tragedy of Divine Love. Indeed, we might almost say that he makes three acts, indicated by the use here and just twice later in His Gospel of the strong, unusual word translated "received." First, then, he shows us God the Father giving His Only-begotten to His people, and the Jews refusing to receive Him, although He was but claiming admission to His own home. It is a rejection repeated with dull monotony all through the succeeding ages. For instance, are there not many clubs and societies in America which blackball a certain Applicant without a voice raised in His favor?

But there came a time when the Jews did not reject Him. Pilate "delivered Him unto them to be crucified and they *received* Him" (xix: 16). Their hospitality was a halter and a scourge and a cross. Nor can we confine the guilt of that Deicide to one race. It attaches to the Christian nations as well. How many million Christian hearts among us receive Jesus only to crucify Him!

Now, what awful reprisals does God intend to take? In return for our excluding Him even from a place on earth to lay His Head, and then admitting Him to the treatment we mete out to the lowest criminals, He will give Heaven and eternal life to all who will permit Him to save them. He has gone to prepare a place for us, and with this promise: "I will come again, and *receive* you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also" (xiv: 3). This is the dear revenge of the

Eternal Giver, a reception into an immortality of happiness beyond our understanding now, as the reward for our making Him the "very Scorn of men and the Outcast of the people." Surely such a revelation of God's incredible mercy fills our Advent with the challenge of Love, even more than with that of Holy Fear. Surely, too, it teaches us what St. John means when he calls us the "children of God."



### **The First Friday in Advent**

#### **The Children of God**

Our dear Leader, St. John, alone among the Evangelists, and, except St. Paul, alone among the sacred writers of the Bible, describes God's people as His "children" by a Greek word which expresses *actual relationship* (i: 12). There is another noun, which is customarily employed for "children," and this means simply "young people." Also, St. John learned his term for Christians from our Lord. Still again, Jesus used it for the first time the night before He suffered, and, apparently, directly after He had celebrated the first Eucharist, and communicated the nucleus of His Church gathered about Him with the Blessed Sacrament of His own Humanity (xiii: 33). Thus when our Apostle calls us "God's children," or "little children," he is using an expression drawn from our Lord Himself and having the tenderest and most sacred meaning and associations.

But we will understand this conception of the Apostle of Love more clearly, if we trace it from its earliest form in Genesis (vi: 2). There first we read of the "sons of God," that is, the better and more faithful

line of Adam's descendants. The thought is that they are *made* in the image and likeness of God (Gen. i: 26). They were meant to walk in close fellowship with their Creator, and to reveal Him, at least in a dim way, to their fellow-men. This is indicated by the fact that the word "image" means really "shadow-image." As a man's shadow is ever by his side, shows the outline of his figure, and, however poorly, represents his person, so the sons of God are to walk humbly with Him, and, albeit imperfectly, to manifest a similarity to His Nature. Now, when we reach St. Paul, far along in the progress of revelation, we find that his most prominent idea of sonship toward God is that of *adoption*, through union with Christ (Eph. i: 5 f.). The great Apostle of the Gentiles knew well the power and privileges springing from adoption, for freedom and many immunities and advantages, in the Roman Empire, had come to him through his having been adopted by one of its citizens (cp. e.g. Acts xxii: 25-29). But as to the children of the Kingdom of God, the Catholic Church, he considers that every one of them not only gained freedom and many priceless privileges by his adoption in Baptism, but, more than this, became the "image and glory" of the King (1 Cor. xi: 7). It is in St. John, however, that the long process reaches its consummation. The distinctive conception of our relationship to God in his writings is that of sonship by *actual generation*, as well as by creation and by adoption. The Christian is, in Baptism, "born," or literally "begotten," "of God" (i: 13; cp. 1 St. John iii: 9).

Now it is the way of us fallen creatures "to walk in a painted image," and disquiet ourselves foolishly over temporal, material things (Ps. xxxix: 6, A. V. Old

Marg.). Our self-love daubs us over with the paint of false pride. Shall we not rather be proud of our caste as the children of God, and seek, with genuine self-love, to reveal always the image and likeness of Him by Whom we have been begotten?



### **The First Saturday in Advent**

#### **Grace and Truth Through Jesus**

The Beloved Apostle loved to show that all good things spring from Jesus as their Source. For this purpose he has been at pains to include in his Gospel those teachings of his Master in which He declared Himself to be the Food, the Light and the Life of men, and the Fountain-head of "living water" (vi: 48; viii: 12; xiv: 6; iv: 10). For life, light, food and water are the four necessities for man's physical welfare, and the spiritual essentials which our Lord signified by these symbols are all our souls need and are all found in Him. St. John summarizes the fuller teaching, however, in his Prologue, saying simply that "the Word made Flesh, is full of grace and truth," where the equivalent of spiritual life, food and drink is grace, and the synonym of the Divine light is truth.

But if the truth in Christ is light, nothing can be hidden from it. Every evasion, every disloyalty, every hidden sin of our souls, lies exposed in the radiance of Jesus' gaze. Consequently, we must be always receiving more sanctifying grace through the sacraments to cleanse and quicken us, and inflame us with love. As St. Bernard says: "Each of these is necessary to me: truth, that I may not be able to hide myself, grace that I may not desire to." There is no stint in the sup-

ply of grace. "Of His *fulness* have all we received." But there is a limit which we establish in ourselves if we do not use the measure bestowed upon us. The Divine rule is to give "grace for grace," that is, to give more when that already infused into our souls has wrought piety and good works. Except for the obstruction of our own self-will, therefore, we would all be full of grace drawn from our Lord's Soul; as the rivers are filled from the vast ocean, through those sacraments of nature, the clouds.

Continuing, St. John points to another motive for being avaricious of grace. "The Law was given through Moses," he says, "but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." His carefully chosen phrase "*through* Moses" indicates that the Ten Commandments came "*from* God." He gave them, moreover, in a way to commend them to the deepest reverence of His people. They were written by the Holy Ghost, the "Finger of God," and delivered to His great saint by the ministry of the holy angels (Ex. xxxi: 18; St. Luke xi: 20, cp. St. Matt. xii: 28; Gal. iii: 19). Nor are they less sacred, but rather more, to the Catholic Church than to God's ancient people. We are, indeed, more responsible for keeping them, because, for one thing, we are entrusted with a far more complete revelation of the truth. Accordingly, Jesus Christ, Himself, full of grace, must come to us Christians in the Blessed Sacrament, and endue us with power to keep His holy Law.

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**The Second Week in Advent.**

Read St. John i: 15-36

**The Second Sunday in Advent****The Temptation of St. John Baptist**

At the same time that our Lord was enduring His forty days of fasting and trial on the mount, His great Forerunner was being tempted in the valley of the Jordan. It was a very real strain upon the Baptist's will when the Sanhedrists came to him offering to accept him as Elijah or as that greatest of the prophets foretold by Moses, or even as the Christ. For, in a spiritual sense he *was* Elijah. Had not the angel prophesied of him: "He shall go before [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elias?" (St. Luke i: 17.) And indeed we have the statement of Jesus Himself that in the holy Baptist was fulfilled the prophecy that Elijah would herald Him (St. Matt. xvii: 10-13). He *was* the last and greatest of the Old Testament prophets (St. Luke vii: 26 f.). He may have known also that he had so deeply stirred the religious and patriotic sentiments of his people that there was a wide disposition to accept him as the Messiah (St. Luke iii: 15). Besides, the committee of the Sanhedrin paid him a very great honor in waiting upon him, and at the same time made a concession to his claims; for it was written in their traditions that when Elijah came he would first of all present himself before the Sanhedrin to obtain his credentials. But St. John had entirely ignored them, and, after waiting for a time, they had humbled themselves and had come to seek him. It might well have seemed to the Baptist that it was only fair to meet them half way. Finally, there were many ways in which he could have used the interview thus sought

by the haughty leaders of the Jews to increase his already great popularity and prestige.

Now, we must observe that he utterly refused to dally with this multiform temptation, and his answers to the Pharisees became increasingly brief as they pressed him to talk about himself. "Who art thou?" "I am not the Christ." "Art thou Elijah?" "I am not!" "Art thou that prophet?" "No!" In the Greek, it is as if he were biting off his sentences. The third answer, in two letters, has a particularly final sound. The questioners weakened, as the Baptist thus rebuffed them. They began the interview proudly and boldly enough: "*Thou—who art thou?*" is the literal force of their demand. But their lofty tone subsided into a cringing one before St. John's determined rejection of his temptation. "Who art thou?" they begged appealingly. "We only venture to ask so that we can give an answer to those who sent us." So it is with us. If we resolutely refuse to entertain even the first suggestion of the Devil, he will cower, and presently flee before us.

Our Evangelist twice in one doubly emphatic statement says of his Namesake, that the Baptist "confessed." In the Fourth Gospel this word always indicates a victory of faith and love. Our inspiration to resist self-love, like his, is the conquest we make of Jesus' enemies, and the glory we give thereby to His great name of Saviour.



### **The Second Monday in Advent**

#### **St. John Baptist the True Herald of Christ**

The holy Baptist had the strongest possible motives for concluding that Jesus was the Christ long before

the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him betokened His Messianic office infallibly. Evidently, he had, before the baptism of Jesus, known Him as supereminently holy, for when his divine Cousin approached him at the Jordan, he would have prevented Him from receiving the laver of repentance, saying: "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" (St. Matt. iii: 13 ff.). And this plain admission of his inferiority to the Boy and Man with Whom he had grown up is clear testimony to his great reverence for the sanctity of our Lord. Indeed, it is all but an assertion of His Messiahship, for only the Lord Himself ought to baptize His Forerunner. Yet he would not proclaim Jesus as Christ, until the appointed sign had been given. Until it was revealed to him, he "knew not" Jesus as the Messiah. However appropriate he saw that it would be for God to reveal Jesus as the Saviour, he would not anticipate the revelation of Him. In this way, he teaches us that we must be guided by the actual revelation of the Allwise God, in the Bible as interpreted by Holy Church. It would be foolish and irreverent for us to follow our own prior assumption that this or that would be appropriate for God, and therefore must be the way in which he deals with our souls.

Again, St. John was not influenced in the least by the popular speculations of what the Messiah would be like, nor by desire for the applause of the Jews. They were looking for a great Warrior who would lead them to victory against the Romans. If he had been a false prophet, he would have declared that he had beheld a gigantic eagle descending upon Jesus' head to mark Him out as one before Whom the eagles of the Romans would go down to defeat. But, truthfully, he pro-

claimed that he had been shown, not an eagle on Messiah's helm, but a Dove *abiding* in His Heart. The revelation was in fact, not of a great conqueror who should lead the Jews to victory against the hated invaders, but of One about Whom there was to be "a brooding peace, a lowly gentleness, a still small voice." In our day, also, there are plausible and often attractive descriptions of imaginary Christs, but *our* Lord is He Who was revealed in the Gospels.

Finally, the holy Forerunner would not permit his temperament and prejudices to make him less receptive of revealed truth. His natural disposition was severe, his whole training had been sternly ascetical, and his indignation against the wickedness and hypocrisy of the Jews was great. He had expected our Lord to come with a flail to separate the wheat of His own disciples from the chaff of the unrepentant, and with unquenchable fire wherewith immediately to burn the chaff (St. Matt. iii: 12). Then appeared the lowly Saviour taking His place with sinners in the baptism of repentance. Instead of the Mighty One (St. Luke iii: 16), the stern Judge executing instant vengeance upon His enemies, "behold the Lamb of God!" Yet St. John immediately accepted and proclaimed the Messiah as He was. Thus he teaches us a third great lesson, that we can surmount the limitations of temperament and defy inherited or acquired prejudice, which would exclude from our hearts the Christ of the Gospels and His teaching. Let us resolve that we will ever hold fast to Him Who comes to us down the ages of Catholic tradition.

## **The Second Tuesday in Advent**

### **St. John Baptist as the Type of the True Priest**

St. John completely lost himself in his office as our Lord's Forerunner. He was simply the "voice of one crying in the wilderness." In the presence of Christ his separate entity was lost. A voice has no existence until it is uttered and then at once it disappears on the air and leaves no record of itself. Yet it was by no means the individuality of the Baptist which was thus suppressed, but his natural individualism. For evidently his personality continued definite and strong. If we examine his statements, we find the "I's" very frequent, and in the Greek these are particularly emphatic, because they are expressed by the pronoun, instead of being implied in the form of the verb, as is usual where there is no special emphasis on the personality of the speaker. But his self-consciousness had given way to the consciousness of his ministry as our Lord's herald. And the more the Christian priest, like St. John, loses himself in his sacred office for the High-priest, the greater will be the holiness and power of his personality and the less will be his individualism. Let the lay-people help him to this self-consecration by seeking from him a Christ-like cure of their souls, rather than natural attractiveness or brilliance.

As a preacher, St. John was exactly suited to his people's wants, in the sense that he was an ascetic, a priest, and a prophet. For in this way he was the appropriate minister for the three principal sections of the Jews, the strict Pharisees, the hierarchy and the main body of the lay-people, and that small but all-important group who were eagerly expecting the advent of a true prophet after the centuries of silence following

Malachi. Consequently, he inspired his hearers profoundly so that "all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or no" (St. Luke iii: 15). Yet he never courted popularity nor yielded to it when it came unsought. So completely was he absorbed in preaching Christ, that naught remained of him except a voice, but that voice framed the Word of God.

In his character, he united the qualities of the seer and the practical servant of Christ. He performed his day's duty to the least detail, while his eyes were straining for the vision of Christ. Moreover, while he was abjectly humble, too mean in his own eyes, indeed, to perform a slave's office for Christ, yet he was fearless before Herod's court, when his own life was at stake. Now, "As with the people, so with the priest" (Isa. xxiv: 2). If our congregations want priests and prophets like St. John Baptist, they must produce them. Only holy parents can give the Church holy ministers. When there are more St. Elisabeths, there will be more seers and martyrs.



## **The Second Wednesday in Advent**

### **St. John Baptist's Sermon**

The burden of the proclamation made by our Lord's herald was, "Repent ye for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Often, however, he expressed this same thought in the words of Isaiah (xl: 3), "Make straight the way of the Lord," or, more fully, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight,

and the rough ways shall be made smooth." Now, the meaning of Isaiah's cry, thus adopted by the Baptist, was that Jehovah was about to return from Babylon, leading his people home to the Promised Land, and He demanded a new, straight road to be constructed for him through the desert. There was a roundabout, conventional, wide highway from Babylon to Jerusalem, but the Lord would lead his people straight forward, by the shortest way, although this involved leveling valleys, straightening out curves, and smoothing down innumerable rough places. The meaning was, of course, that God's people must make for him a straight and speedy way into their heart of hearts.

There were certain principles of gentleness and appealing kindness which Christ's great Servant followed in this sermon of his. In the first place, he assumed that there was some knowledge of his subject already in his hearers' minds. He does not think it necessary to explain the ancient prophecy he uses. The people are familiar with its meaning and the way in which it was fulfilled by the return of the exiles. Far oftener than we usually suppose, this same method of teaching was used by those earliest preachers of Christ. The Apostle of Love customarily takes a tone with those to whom he writes, as if he would say, "I tell you this, but of course you already know it in substance." Is not our own method very different from this, very often? Are not we obnoxious to the charge of Frederick Dennison Maurice that we act as if we could teach people by screaming the truth in their ears? We will be more successful in converting unbelievers, if we gladly recognize all that is true in the position they are already holding.

In two other ways, St. John gained sympathy and receptivity in his congregation. (a) He did not ignore the difficulties which beset the course he was advocating. It was a hard matter to make a straight highway through a wilderness. It was even more difficult to smooth a path for Jesus Christ over the mountainous obstacles of human pride and selfishness. (b) He sounded, in his sermon, a great note of joy and triumph. Jehovah was leading His people home, in the thought of Isaiah, and St. John pictured Him entering into His creature's heart and bringing with Him the Kingdom of Heaven.



### **The Second Thursday in Advent**

#### **Our Lord's Help to St. John Baptist**

The great Herald of Christ knew, it seems, that he would never live to see the triumph of his Master. His humble saying, "I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose the latchet of His sandals and then carry them away," as, we may collect from the Gospels, is his complete metaphor, probably involves a prophecy of his own speedy death. For he refers to the slave's duty to his master at the end of a journey, or when his lord has returned from the battlefield. It was then at the conclusion of the dusty, laborious march, when the strife had ended in victory, that the master sat down and received from his servant the removal of his sandals and the refreshing bath for his feet. And St. John foresaw that he must be content with the honor of announcing the beginning of our Lord's long, arduous "way." Others would unloose His sandals, when the journey's end had come, and He had triumphed in the mortal strife of His Passion.

But if the Baptist must look forward to his own martyrdom, and see it, too, directly before him, he had the help of his Lord's example to strengthen and encourage him. For he was allowed to understand what seems to have been hidden from the comprehension of the Twelve until the very end of Jesus' ministry, that He, being the Lamb of God, must be sacrificed to "take away the sins of the world." Perhaps the sacrificial lambs for the Passover were being driven past St. John at the time, and, seeing them without spot or blemish, in their innocence, going on to die for the sins of the people, he was the better able to foresee the martyrdom of the Son of God, and its blessed sacrificial value for the sons of men. Certainly he understood, at least dimly, that God had come into the world to die for him, and so he gained great strength and courage to die for God.

For John was fearless throughout his rugged, stormy career, and that while he stood alone. Most men can pluck up courage when they stand abreast of their fellows. But the Baptist grew up as a solitary of the desert. He came forth to preach alone, he was imprisoned in solitary confinement, and he died there in the gloomy prison of Machærus at midnight, alone. Surely, the secret of his unflinching bravery was his knowledge that in his loneliness also, he was like the Lamb of God. His Cousin must tread the winepress alone, and always, in His Heart of Hearts, bear the isolation of One supremely great. Thus St. John would be certain, during the long weeks of his confinement, that God the Father must have some wise and beneficent purpose in his loneliness, inasmuch as He was leading His very own Son by solitary ways.

## **The Second Friday in Advent**

### **Self-denial for Jesus' Sake**

Heroic as the holy Baptist was, his words, perhaps involuntarily, betray the effort which his self-denial cost him. Thus in the Greek of his saying, "This is He of Whom I said, after me cometh a Man Which is preferred before me, for He was before me," the words "of Whom I said" mean "in Whose behalf I said." And wherever this expression occurs in the Fourth Gospel it implies that a sacrifice has been made in behalf of another. It was not easy for St. John to renounce his great popularity, and declare his utter inferiority to Jesus. But he had the inspiration of knowing that the One for Whom he thus denied himself was the eternal Son of God. "For He was before me," he says of Christ, although our Lord was born six months later than His Forerunner. St. John has in view the eternal preëxistence of the Lord, and he is content to give up all in behalf of such a Master.

Once more, we observe that it had been the plan of the Baptist, from the beginning, so to act that men would turn away from him to follow Christ. "That He should be made manifest to Israel," he declared, "Therefore am I come baptizing." As his baptism of repentance cleansed from men's spiritual eyes the blinding blear of sin, they would recognize Christ as their Saviour. And inevitably, his followers would in this way desert him. It was due to no sudden burst of generous love for Christ, therefore, but to a purpose formed perhaps far back in his wilderness life, when first he knew that he was destined to go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, that he now took the very course which would plunge him from

his lofty pinnacle of popularity into the depths of obscurity and dereliction.

Moreover, we see from the sacred narrative how every detail of his ministry was planned according to his life purpose of self-denial. When the Pharisees challenged him to explain why he was baptizing, if he was not the Christ, or Elijah or the greatest of the prophets, he answered that he was baptizing with water, but there was One for Whom he was simply herald, Who would baptize with the Holy Ghost. They had attacked him on the score that only the Messiah, or one of the two greatest prophets, ought to treat the chosen people as unclean. But his answer meant that he was a nobody and that his baptism in water ought to be allowed to him because it was merely prefatory to the real laver in the Blessed Spirit. And our Evangelist is careful to record that St. John thus renounced all claim to eminence "in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where [he] was baptizing." Upon which St. Chrysostom remarks: "It was not in a house, nor in a corner, nor in the desert, but in the midst of the multitude, that St. John made that admirable confession." Let us learn from this great saint how complete may be our conquest of self-love for the sake of our dear Saviour.



## **The Second Saturday in Advent**

### **St. John Baptist's Teaching on Vocation**

The holy Forerunner of Christ revealed to us by his example the great principles of that fundamental thing in each of our lives—vocation. For each of us is called to be in some way the forerunner of our Lord, whether it be in the world or in the Religious Life, whether it

is the Divine purpose that we become priests or that we do our part for the training of others for the Sacred Ministry. We read that St. John "stood" watching for Christ. He was not engaged in preaching and baptizing. Indeed this was probably the Sabbath when he was enjoined to rest, even from his spiritual labors. No. He stands on the alert to see Christ again, full of eager love for his Master and zeal for His success. Yet, when he once more beheld the Lamb of God, he announced Christ indefinitely, speaking in an impersonal way, into the air, as if addressing no one in particular. Evidently, his thought was that he must preach vocation, but must leave it to come home to the hearts of his disciples by the interior guidance of the Holy Ghost. And we also should expect these two complementary evidences of vocation, in our own case, the call of the Church, sounding in our ears, and the impulse of God moving us to respond, in our hearts.

In these few verses before us (i:35 f.), we have the description of the beginning of the Catholic Church, which is perhaps the most stupendous fact in the history of mankind, for it is the institution of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. But was this divine economy of grace initiated by a mighty miracle wrought before the eyes of all the world? Was it not rather begun by the practical application which two obscure men, in one tiny corner of the earth, gave to a merely general suggestion falling from the lips of a preacher of Christ? What issues of incalculable importance, perhaps in the far distant future, may depend upon *my* obedience to even an intimation from God!

It is remarkable, also, that Christ was at this moment of destiny walking away from those whom He

had eternally purposed should be the first disciples. The day before, He had "come unto" them, but now He is making "as though He would have gone" away. This was to teach them, and us, that in the development of vocation, there are, first, the approach and appeal and attraction of the Lamb of God; and then presently what seems to be His flight from us. We must not, at any such time of spiritual desolation, be too much cast down, but, following these first disciples, pursue Him with faith and love, until we once more gain His tender fellowship.



**The Third Week in Advent.**

Read St. John i: 37-44

### **The Third Sunday in Advent**

#### **The Apostle of Love**

In the passage for our study during this week, we for the first time come upon our dear Apostle of Love. There is truth in the saying that the three great Theological Virtues are exemplified in the three greatest Apostles: faith in St. Paul, hope in St. Peter, and love in St. John. The Beloved Disciple, therefore, is distinguished for the greatest of all spiritual qualities, and one which made him supereminently like Christ. For, our Lord had in His Godhead neither faith nor hope, since God knows all things and therefore believes nothing, while He also possesses all things and therefore hopes for nothing. Moreover, in His Human Mind, Christ probably saw God, throughout His life on earth, and in the Beatific Vision knew with absolute certainty the truth, in which we believe without seeing; and He possessed that fruition of our Christian life for which we only hope. Accordingly,

it was appropriate that the Apostle who was remarkable above all others for Divine Charity should be especially marked out by Jesus as the disciple whom He loved, since He was Perfect Charity.

From this fact, that St. John's love was like that of Christ, it follows that it was no sentimental, girlish characteristic, but was intensely practical. Maurice was stirred almost to indignation by the feminine smoothness of St. John's face in Leonardo da Vinci's fresco of the Last Supper. "Was not St. John the Apostle of Love?" he exclaimed, "Then in such a world of hate and misery as this, do you not think he must have had more furrows in his cheek than all the other apostles?" And Kingsley, who records this episode, knew that his friend "spoke true" of St. John. His writings are full of proofs that in his view Christianity amounts to nothing, unless our daily life is instinct with it. We are to "*do* righteousness," and "*do* the Truth," and "*to have* Eternal Life" now and here.

We shall often have occasion to notice how practically our saintly conductor applied the law of love in his own life. But we may observe here, that it led him to be very appreciative of his fellow disciples and of their positive beauties of character. It is to him we owe those portrayals of Andrew, Philip, Nathanael and Thomas, which reveal them to have been our own dear brethren as well as our saintly exemplars in the spiritual life. Except for his love these would be but names to us. Let us learn from him, as the first lesson of love for our neighbor, that, in the circle of our own home and of our group of friends, we must love best to seek out and find what is gracious and lovely, and to keep these characteristics before our minds.

### **The Third Monday in Advent**

#### **The Humility of St. John the Evangelist**

Love made our Apostle modest, and that according to both its meanings, for he was both humble and pure. He is too modest ever to speak of himself by name, and even the title of honor by which he refers to himself, is one in which we all share with him. He might well have boasted about the loyalty and devotion of his brother, St. James, and of his mother, Salome, but he so shrank from attracting attention to himself, that he leaves his brother entirely out of account, and mentions Salome's watch before the Cross only in a very obscure way, referring to her by the phrase "His mother's sister" (xix: 25). In the same way, and constrained all the more by modesty, he nowhere suggests that he was the nephew of the Blessed Virgin, and cousin of the Incarnate God.

This same kind of humility comes out prominently in certain facts about his sacred literary work. Although it must have seemed to be indicated by his knowledge of our Lord's life on earth, by the further revelations about Jesus which came to him from the Blessed Mother after he took her to his own home (xix: 27), and by his apostolic authority, that he should write a Gospel, he consented to do this only at the request of the faithful, according to the ancient tradition.

Frequently, in his Epistles, he puts himself on a level with his "little children." For example, when he must warn them against that very unreality in their Christian life which was so far removed from himself, he gently makes the exhortation conditional, and delicately and humbly includes himself. "*If we say that we*

have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness *we* lie and do not the truth." Thus lovingly with his "if's" and his "we's" he softens what otherwise would be a stern rebuke. May Love teach us humility like his, and give us a share in his modesty in regard to our family and our performances, and in his gentleness and lowliness in correcting those under our charge.



### **The Third Tuesday in Advent**

#### **St. John the Evangelist a Model of Self-consecration**

For the sake of Jesus, St. John was from his youth devoted to the celibate life. And out of his virgin estate grew, for one thing, his appreciation of holy women. One notices how frequently he describes, with the utmost sympathy, some episode in which the chief human actor is a woman, and invariably the incident redounds to her praise. Again, it seems to have been natural to him, since he had no children of his own, to give his paternal instinct and love expression by adopting the people of his entire archdiocese as his "little ones."

Our leader is, moreover, a model of religious poverty. While he was a young man of some wealth, of the family of David, and of brilliant prospects in view of his intellectual endowment and his favor in the high-priests' palace, he gave up everything to follow Christ. Indeed if it had been possible he would, apparently, have given up his very name, for in his Gospel he resigns it entirely to St. John Baptist, whom he always calls by the simple title "John," as if there were no other John among our Lord's disciples.

He was obedient not simply to the instructions of his first superior, the holy Baptist, but to a mere inti-

mation from him, as we have seen. One suspects that he took the initiative in following our Lord, and that St. Andrew was guided by him. But whether or not this was true, the debt which the world owes to his generous obedience is incalculable, for with these two first disciples the Christian Church began. The time was early spring, and probably the equinox, as the ancient tradition asserts. In our day, an earthly monarch began his drive with the vast hosts of his armies at the vernal equinox. How great is the contrast between the millions of soldiers and the roar of uncounted guns of the one king, and the two Galilean fishermen of the Other! Yet the religious obedience of these two countrymen to the will of the God-Man accomplished that which the gigantic forces of the earthly king failed to do—it initiated the conquest of the whole world for their Master.



### **The Third Wednesday in Advent**

#### **St. John the Evangelist's Religious Spirit**

Our beloved Teacher was always full of gladness over the choice he made at his first meeting with Christ. Sixty-five years afterwards, when he wrote his Gospel, that cry of the Baptist, "After me cometh One Who is preferred before me," rang sweet and clear in his heart. Three times he mentions it (i: 15, 27, 30), in the course of sixteen verses. These words contain a main part of the instruction which soon sent him after Christ, and accordingly he remembers them with deep gratitude, because they brought him the supreme happiness of his life.

Evidently, he began to live when first he gained comradeship with Jesus. All his life, he recollected

that it was "about the tenth hour," when he first went to abide with his Saviour.

He was always ready and willing to do more than was required of him. Indeed, it was because he was generous, rather than merely legal, in his religious spirit, that he had the opportunity of becoming one of the first disciples. For this was the Sabbath day, it seems, when his rule allowed rest, and when the remainder of the Baptist's little community were using the dispensation. Only St. John and St. Andrew were with their good director, and according to their more generous eagerness to serve, it was done unto them. For Christ also there was no Sabbath rest, when these two hearts were waiting to pledge Him their allegiance; and to them first of all the world, He revealed Himself as the Messiah. Let us be sure that whenever we will we can please our Lord by giving Him the offering of a free heart, and that He will by no means let Himself be outdone in generosity, but will set His Heart upon the disciple who so rejoices in his religion that he serves when he might lawfully rest.



### **The Third Thursday in Advent**

#### **St. John the Evangelist's Development**

Even the Beloved Disciple had faults. He showed zeal that was not according to knowledge, nor sufficiently dominated by love, when he would have called down fire upon the inhospitable Samaritan village. He must learn that the fire our Saviour meant to send upon those poor foolish hearts was from a Spirit quite different from that which was misleading the young Apostle (cp. St. Luke ix: 54 ff., and Acts viii: 5-17).

Also, he was ambitious to occupy a position at the right Hand or the Left of Christ in His earthly Kingdom. For the ineffable tenderness of Divine Charity was still beyond his ken. He had not seen the Cross, the Throne of Love, upon which Christ was to reign, with the repentant thief, the soul in dire need of Him, on His right Hand, and on His Left, one over whom His Heart broke in vain.

Apart from his sins, the youngest of the Apostles must have displayed some natural tendencies which needed training and sanctification. For one thing, he seems to have been very dramatic. It is true that all our evidence is drawn from his Gospel, and there this temperamental peculiarity is found consecrated to the sacred purpose of portraying the Tragedy of Divine Love. We notice the "telling brevity and abruptness" of such sentences as "It was night"; "Then saith He unto them, I am"; "Now Barabbas was a robber." Akin to this characteristic is his love of contrasts, exemplified in his hanging side by side his portraits of incredulous Nicodemus, the Sanhedrist of Jerusalem, and the believing Samaritaness, a heretic of a degraded country village. We may well suppose that such qualities of style as these, which the aged Apostle has completely at his command, and uses for the enrichment of his Gospel, indicate that, at his conversion, he might easily have become the victim of a temperament. But under the guidance of his Master's Spirit he learned to force these natural characteristics into Christ's service.

It is profoundly significant that St. John nowhere calls himself the "disciple whom Jesus loved," until his description of the evening before Calvary. Evidently it had required three years of fellowship with

Incarnate God to develop him into a soul upon which Jesus could look with that special regard.



### **The Third Friday in Advent**

#### **Come and See**

The idea with which St. John and St. Andrew approached our Lord was that He was one of the rabbis, for in fact He seems to have worn clothing like theirs. No doubt, they thought, He is traveling, and we will discover His permanent abiding place, so that later we can visit Him and hear His teaching. "Rabbi," they said, "Where dwellest Thou?" But Christ's love was far too eager to brook a delay, "Come at once," is the forceful meaning of His words, "and you shall see." It is always timely to seek our Lord. Often and over He said that "His time had not yet come," but this was never in reference to the approach of a human soul for spiritual aid. It was never inopportune to see such a one no matter how inconveniently the interview intruded upon His retirement.

The phrase with which Jesus thus welcomed His first disciples seems to have had a really hackneyed rabbinical use. It was the new content with which He filled it, which made it so gracious and so appealing. The rabbis would select some hard point in the Law, and, after displaying the apparently insoluble difficulty of the problem, would then invite their disciples to hear their subtle elucidation, saying, "Come and see." Theirs was a religion which centered around the Book of the Law, but *His* disciples must find in *Him* the very Heart of their piety.

For the Kingdom of Heaven in the world began with the introduction to the King of these two first

citizens. In this it is perfectly different, not only from the Jewish Church, but from every human institution. What would a newly-arrived immigrant think, if he were told that his naturalization would involve his becoming an intimate friend of our President! But in the State of Salvation it is of the essence of our citizenship that each subject should come to know his Lord personally. Aliens may know *about* Him, but we know *Him* and by faith see Him (xiv: 19).



### **The Third Saturday in Advent**

#### **Jesus Among the Sons of Men**

These first disciples of our Blessed Lord were very different from one another. St. Peter was eager and impetuous, while St. Philip was slow and cautious and disposed to demand sensible evidence before forming a conclusion. St. Andrew was the very type of the active missionary; St. Nathanael displays the qualities of the contemplative. Yet over all these hearts our Lord established His dominion. It was as if He would, from the beginning, disprove that modern excuse for unbelief, the assertion that there are temperaments to which He cannot appeal.

His methods of attracting them, moreover, were remarkably varied. St. John and St. Andrew were drawn to Him by the life and preaching of a holy priest, St. John Baptist. St. Peter was called by his own brother, and we may observe in passing that it is not always easy for one to be evangelized by a relative. Nathanael, finally, was brought to his Lord by a friend. Jesus has, in truth, as many methods of gaining human hearts as there are different individuals in the world—and no two people are alike.

Once more, let us notice that our Lord had a special way of treating each new follower. His first words to St. John and St. Andrew were: "What seek ye?" And thus He made them examine their own motives in coming to Him. But He, Himself, searched the hearts of St. Peter and St. Nathanael. Furthermore, He implied that He disapproved of the natural man He saw in St. Peter, but promised him that Simon, son of Jonah, should, for all his instability, become Cephas, a stone hewn out of the side of the Rock of Ages. On the other hand, He approved of the guilelessness He found in St. Nathanael and promised him the vision of his Lord's enthronement among the holy angels (i: 51). It must have required supreme trust in Him to keep them content, from the first, with such varied treatment as this; and cannot we, like them, confide in the infinite love of our Saviour to deal with each of us as is best for him?

**The Fourth Week in Advent.**

Read St. John i: 45-51

### **The Fourth Sunday in Advent**

#### **Bible Study and Meditation**

The few rapid strokes by which St. John portrays for us St. Nathanael, reveal that he was particularly notable for a habit of reading and dwelling upon the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah. His intimate friend could describe Christ to him sufficiently as He "of Whom Moses wrote, and the prophets." The very form of the sentence seems to imply that the two had often studied together the Old Testament teaching about Christ. As an ancient writer paraphrases St. Philip's announcement, it was as if he had said, "We have found Whom we sought, Whom we

looked forward to having, Whom the Scriptures promised." There under the fig tree, in his garden, he seems, at the time he was called, to have been meditating upon Jacob's vision of the angels ascending to Jehovah in Heaven and returning to earth laden with His gifts for men. But when would the time arrive that Jehovah Himself would come down and save His people!

Thus he had, through devout pondering on the Holy Scripture, become a member of that little group who "looked for redemption in Israel"; and he had laid hold on the deeper truths about Messiah revealed in the Old Testament, so that he was not constrained by the contemporary Jewish traditions. "Search and look," said the rabbis, "for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." But by prayer and loving study of the Bible, St. Nathanael had gained the power to transcend such prejudices. "The remnant of Israel" to which he belonged, holy souls who waited for Christ to be their Consolation, were throughout His ministry, a source of great happiness and courage to His sacred Heart. Some of them waited upon their Infant Lord in the Cave of the Nativity; and in the Temple, in the midst of His struggles with the Pharisees, He remembered them with joy and spoke of them as the sheep who had not heard the voice of the false shepherds (x: 5, 8). Thus St. Nathanael was taught by meditation on Holy Writ to be indeed what his name implies, "the gift of God," to our Lord. And, just as truly, each one who accepts the pure Catholic Religion, without addition or subtraction, is a joy to Him, and must be only the more loyal to Him if the whole body of the faithful is small.

Christ richly rewarded our Saint's study and medi-

tation, and the desire for Him which was developed by these means. Not only did He call him to be an Apostle, but so eager was the Divine Love which responded to his door human love, that It outran St. Philip and was already drawing his heart to his Master before his friend arrived. "Before that Philip called thee," Jesus said unto him: "When thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Thus He ever loves to see His people at meditation and to satisfy the desire for Himself which it stimulates and develops.

### **The Fourth Monday in Advent**

#### **Love Consecrates Obstacles**

St. Philip was from Bethsaida, which was the city also of Ss. Andrew and Peter and of St. Philip's brother, St. James. They must have grown up, therefore, in one of the most wicked cities of Palestine, upon which our gentle Saviour pronounced a terrible judgment because of its iniquity (St. Matt. xi: 21 f.). They became Apostles and Saints in spite of their environment, and the same may be said of all the Twelve who were faithful. One only of the Apostolic Band was not a Galilean, and that was Judas Iscariot, whose surname shows that he came from Kerioth, a suburb of Jerusalem. Every spiritual privilege and opportunity must have been his from his boyhood, yet he became the traitor and, by suicide, went to his own place.

Jesus distinguished St. Philip by an extraordinary mark of devotion to him. He journeyed into Galilee, probably to Bethsaida, in order to find him; and this fact is the more remarkable because it is not recorded of any other that our Lord sought him out. Perhaps, however, we discover the reason for this unique voca-

tion when we read that Christ had only to say to him: "Follow Me," and he immediately followed. He seems to have made it appropriate for our Lord to bestow upon him this great favor of calling him in Person, by the way he had transcended the obstacle of his evil surroundings, and probably had even learned from them a greater hatred of the world and a deeper realization of his need of God.

And not only was he obliged thus to convert the environment of the wicked Bethsaida to his spiritual ends, but he must needs consecrate a temperament which was remarkably hostile to supernatural truth, for he was one of those people who are disposed to believe nothing except what they can see. Once our Lord said to His Apostles that in a true sense they already knew the Father and had seen Him, and Philip, characteristically, answered Him, "Lord, show us the Father and it sufficeth us." But not only did he overcome his natural antipathy to belief in the invisible things of God, but he actually turned his temperament to account. For, when he had himself become satisfied that Jesus was the Messiah, he ever after went about inviting people to "come and see" our Lord and be themselves convinced of His unseen Divinity. He knew that Jesus had perfectly satisfied him, and recognizing the difficulty of his Master's task in converting persons of his sort, he hit upon this plan of leading them to see the evidence they demanded in the patent holiness and miracles of Christ. With his example before us, we can never charge our environment or our natural dispositions with our unbelief or lack of devotion. Let us rather consecrate the circumstances of our daily life and make them help us to be more perfect servants of Jesus.

## **The Fourth Tuesday in Advent**

### **A Holy Influence**

St. Andrew is chiefly remarkable, in St. John's sketch of him, for the influence he exerted upon his brethern. His very first notable act is to bring his own brother to Jesus. In Church history, he is nothing, one might almost say, and St. Peter is much, yet would there have been a St. Peter, except for the holy influence of St. Andrew?

He was one of the first two disciples, and we would have supposed that Christ would have included him among the three who constituted the innermost group of his Apostles. But he was passed over and St. Peter and St. James, the next two who came to our Lord, were chosen. No doubt Divine Wisdom knew that it was best to leave him to exercise his blessed helpfulness among the rank and file of the disciples. Prominence would have marred or perhaps taken away St. Andrew's opportunity.

Presently, however, we see that through his exercising influence with men for Christ, he speedily gained influence with Christ for men. The lad with the loaves and fishes found in him a mediator through whom he ventured to make his humble offering (vi:8 f.). Again, when the Greeks came desiring to see Jesus, they approached St. Philip, whose name was Greek, but he begged St. Andrew to intercede for them with Christ (xii: 20 ff.). Finally, when the central circle of the Apostolic College wished to obtain from their Master a revelation as to the time when the Temple would be destroyed, they seem to have asked St. Andrew to assist them (St. Mark xiii: 3). Let us, then, remember that this great servant of our King still by

his prayers in Heaven seeks his brother in the world, and has a mighty influence on behalf of his clients with the Judge of all.



### **The Fourth Wednesday in Advent**

#### **The Angels and the Son of Man**

It is thought that our Lord's reception of St. Nathanael took place near Bethel and Peniel, both of which were scenes of Jacob's visions of Jehovah surrounded by angels (Gen. xxviii: 12-22; xxxii: 2, 24-30). If so, Jesus has taken advantage of this fact about the locality to facilitate His hearers' acceptance of a very great revelation about Himself. For, as the entire host of the angels met Jacob at Mahanaim, or as it is also called Peniel, and a Man was in their midst Whom the Patriarch recognized as God, so, Christ promised them, they would some day see Him, the Son of Man, with the whole company of His angels doing Him homage. "Hereafter," He said with His doubly solemn "verily, verily," "ye shall see Heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."

But it is Bethel which is evidently more in our Lord's view. Now, Bethel means the "House of God." Jacob, after his vision there set up the stone, which had been his pillow, for an altar, whereon he afterward offered sacrifice to Jehovah. In fact, Bethel was a church, but it was an empty church, out of which the angels were ascending to Jehovah in Heaven. In contrast with it, Jesus teaches that our House of God is to have Jehovah Incarnate present in it. But there is only one way in which this is possible, for our Lord is present *as Man*, on earth, only in the Blessed Sacra-

ment. Therefore, He meant that, when the words of consecration have been said, we are with our spiritual eyes to behold the whole host of Heaven "descending upon the Son of Man."

It is remarkable that in the only two passages of St. John's Gospel and Epistles which speak of angels, he represents them as a guard of honor about the Body of Christ (cp. xx: 12). Their ardent, perfect devotion to our Lord was a great example and stimulus to the Apostolic Church (cp. Heb. xii: 22; 1 Cor. xi: 10; 1 St. Tim. v: 21). Ought not we, also, to recollect that "angels and archangels and all of the company of heaven" with us adore the Son of Man as He comes upon our altar? When He said "the angels of God," speaking of them collectively, He meant that all the nine choirs would be "descending" upon Him in the New Bethel. Let us, with holy envy, imitate that unselfish love of theirs which keeps them ever worshipping Him in the Divine Mysteries, although they cannot receive Him in Holy Communion. And let us, on our part, reveal to them the manifold fruits of the Blessed Sacrament in and through us; for they can never know the power of Christ in its most miraculous operations, unless we, each one, display the conquest of His grace over our self-will.



### **The Fourth Thursday in Advent**

#### **The Consecration of the Son of Man**

St. John reveals to us that all three Persons of the Blessed Trinity participated in the consecration of Jesus' Manhood. At the moment of Its creation, the Father consecrated Him (x: 36). When the Divine

Dove descended upon Him at His Baptism, this was the operation of the Holy Ghost upon His Human Soul, creating a still more overflowing measure of grace. Finally, just the night before He suffered, He consecrated Himself to be a very Sacrament of Love for the offering He was about to make of Himself upon the Cross (xvii: 19). By this threefold consecration He was filled with all the blessings which Divine Wisdom foresaw we would need for our salvation.

"He was full of grace and truth." Grace is the choicest fruit of Divine Love, because it not only saves the soul into which it is infused, but imparts to it a beauty so like that of God that it becomes the object of the angels' wonder and love. The fulness of truth which He brought replaced pathetic uncertainty, even about our immortality, which was known even to the saints of the Old Testament but imperfectly (cp. 2 St. Tim. i: 10). At His Incarnation, moreover, the Father gave into his Human Hand dominion over all things, that He might administer them for His people (iii: 35). One more blessing was the gift to us in Jesus of the fulness of life (x: 10).

Two great truths appear from this Divine largess so prodigally poured out to us in the consecrated Humanity of Christ: (a) Our salvation must be of exceeding importance in God's eyes. By holding us worth the price of His Son's Life, He challenges us to prize ourselves at as dear a rate, and not to sell out for some paltry bauble of Satan. (b) It is the nature of love to communicate itself and this is as true of Divine Charity in us as in God. Let us then hear Him saying to each one of us, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing" (Gen. xii: 2).

## **Christmas Eve**

### **Christ's Favorite Title for Himself**

After Jesus had been called by others the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, and the theocratic King of Israel, and had revealed Himself to be "God only begotten Who is in the Bosom of the Father," none of these magnificent titles of humanity and even Deity did He prefer for Himself, but the simple, humble phrase, "Son of Man." He loved this greatly, as appears from the fact that He used it of Himself eighty times in the Gospels.

In marked contrast with this custom of our Saviour, is the manner in which all the Evangelists and sacred writers entirely avoid calling Christ the Son of Man. Naturally, they objected to applying to Him a title which had hardly any reference to the messiah in the Psalms and prophecies. In the Old Testament it signifies the humility and weakness of man. Thus the Psalmist speaks of the "son of man whom God has made a little lower than the angels" (Ps. viii: 5); and God addresses Ezekiel by this same phrase, in order to remind him that he shares the frailties of his fellow-Israelites (ii: 1, 3, 6, etc.). Inevitably, it seemed to those lovers of our Lord, the saints who surrounded Him, that "Son of Man" was too poor and lowly a designation for the Son of God.

But why did our Lord prefer to call Himself "the Son of Man"? It was because this title proclaimed His essential kinship with every member of our race. It implies what St. John teaches in another form when he says that the Word became flesh, that is, that God the Son took *all* humanity. Both sexes, all the five

families of mankind, and all generations share in His Human Nature. This is why we find Him displaying the moral qualities of the perfect woman together with the characteristics of the finest and truest gentleman. It explains to us why Jesus belongs to every people and age. It shows us, too, that He is the nearest and dearest of all, to each one of us. For to each He is as the Eldest Son.

### **Christmas Day**

#### **The Son of God the Lover of Our Race**

Jesus proved Himself to be the infallible, and most loving, Interpreter of our race. We have already found Him looking into the hearts of men and reading them with perfect insight and infinite charity. His immediate appreciation of St. Nathanael is, however, particularly beautiful, because it stands in contrast with what seems to have been the latter's failure, at first, to appreciate Him. Cana, where St. Nathanael lived (xxi: 2), was very near Nazareth, and St. Philip, in calling his friend, refers to Christ by the name for Him which was used among the people of His home village, "Jesus the Son of Joseph." Apparently, both men knew our Lord, but St. Nathanael had not rightly interpreted Him, or he could never have said, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Yet at that very moment, our Lord "saw" into his heart of hearts and was dwelling upon the virtue for which he was remarkable, his guilelessness. For Jesus Christ, Whom we so often misunderstand and undervalue, always accepts us at our best.

Jesus is the perfect Man. All talent and all genius found their highest perfection in that Human Mind,

Which was united to Deity, and received by reflection from the Divine Person all knowledge which It could have and remain Human. Moreover, He was Man and had in Himself the perfection of humanity. "All that truly belongs to every individual in the race," said Bp. Westcott, "belongs to Him." Thus He possessed the genius of the poet, the painter and the musician, and that in a degree only less than infinite because of the essential limitations of His Human Soul. And every truth of science and every inspiration of human artists is an adumbration from the Mind of Jesus. For He is "the true Light which lighteth every man" and is continually "coming into" the world with the gifts of civilization.

Jesus made one proud claim upon His people because He was the Son of God. It was that He was entitled to work for men on the Sabbath. "My Father worketh even until now," He insisted, "and I work" (v:17, A. V. Marg.). He meant that He and His Father were accustomed to labor for men without respite, throughout the seven days of the week. Time was, when God took His Sabbath's rest, for we read that, before the fall of man He rested on the seventh day (Gen. ii. 2). But when His children turned against Him, struck hands with His mortal foe, and spoiled the good world which He had created, He renounced His Sabbath repose, because our race in its weakness would need His utmost Providence. How can we love and bless God enough for making Himself the servant of His fallen creatures, and for coming into our world to reveal the dear truth of His sleepless, infinite love for us!

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**During the Octave of Christmas.**

**Read St. John ii: 1-11**

## **St. Stephen's Day**

### **Consecration Through the Son of Man**

The first miracle wrought by our Lord was in no sense an impromptu occurrence. He evidently waited, at St. Nathanael's house it seems, for the occasion of the wedding, in order by the "sign" to manifest His glory, and gain the faith of His new disciples. The miracle which followed, after three days, displayed, with almost unparalleled clearness, our Lord's power to convert very inferior material into means which He can use for the purpose of His perfect wisdom and love. He could change water into wine, and afterwards He could consecrate wine to be the Sacrament of His Blood. In one way, it was a work of still greater power when He changed passionate Stephen into loving Stephen, since the free will of the man might have resisted Him as material elements could not.

The martyr whom we commemorate to-day, is the only person in the New Testament except our Lord Himself, who ever spoke of Him as the Son of Man (Acts vii: 56). St. Stephen had been inveighing against the perverse unbelief of the Jews. "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," was his terrible rebuke, "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." His denunciation of them was, indeed, so severe that his words, in the expressive verb of the original, "sawed through their hearts," and "they gnashed on him with their teeth." It was then that Jesus in Heaven appeared to His servant with such marks of His own Passion in His glorified Body, that St. Stephen could

not but recognize in Him his Fellow, the Son of Man, Who had preceded him in passing through the agony of persecution and martyrdom. The effect upon the holy Deacon was immediately to make him wonderfully gentle and loving toward his murderers.

He was led out to die at the usual place of Jewish executions, which seems to have been near Calvary. Certainly, St. Stephen was reminded by his vision, if not by the locality, of the way in which our Saviour had endured His Cross. As the stones fell thick and fast upon him, he imitated the first and last words of his crucified Master. As Christ had said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," so he "cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not this sin to their charge." And as our Lord had, at the last, commended His Spirit into His Father's hands, so His servant prayed saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus was the best wine saved until the last, and then consecrated for Jesus' great purpose of love. For Saul, who was keeping the witnesses' clothes, and by that very office signifying that he assumed the chief responsibility for the deed, was a "chosen vessel" of our Lord (Acts ix: 15). By Stephen's saintly death the first step was taken toward filling him from the martyr's soul with the precious vintage of Divine Love, that in him it might be borne unto the Gentiles (cp. Acts ix: 5, where St. Stephen's last words are the "goads"). May Jesus so fill this stony water-pot in my breast with His best wine that at least one other soul may become His chosen vessel brimming with love for Him!



## **St. John the Evangelist's Day**

### **The Consecration of Our Will**

In the training of our Lord's youngest Apostle, the great necessity was that He should teach him to consecrate his will so that he could wait calmly until his Master's hour should come. St. John must learn to "tarry the Lord's leisure," and to fulfill the Divine purpose for him in every detail throughout his long life. He must know how to go forward, step by step, deliberately, yet always with prompt obedience to the will of his Lord. In this extraordinarily difficult lesson, our Lord was his perfect Preceptor. Long before He declared in words the guiding principle of the Beloved Disciple's life (xxi: 22 f.), He instructed him by His own example. For it has been truly said that men feel the sorest strain about an enterprise when they first begin it, and when they finish. At those two times, they retire into strict seclusion, perhaps admitting a very few intimates, and there, behind locked doors, feverishly, sleeplessly, labor and plan. But our Lord, at both these crucial times, in what was infinitely the greatest enterprise ever undertaken in the world, attended festival meals. For He inaugurated His Ministry at the wedding feast of Cana, and prefaced its conclusion on the Cross by the supper in his honor at Bethany (xii: 1 f.). The young Evangelist could not have had more impressive lessons in that perfect, calm consecration of his will, which in fact he displays more and more during the threescore years of his life after Pentecost.

The narrative of this miracle is peculiar to the Fourth Gospel, and evidently it had impressed itself profoundly upon St. John. Often and often, during

the years of his life with the Blessed Virgin after Christ committed her to his charge they had talked it over, and she had supplied those details which had been known only to her. For no doubt, this was an epoch-making day in his life, when the water of his natural weakness was changed to the precious wine of a great love for Jesus, and he consecrated himself wholly to his Lord. It is this spiritual truth, we may suppose, which underlies the old legend that the wedding at Cana was his own, and that after the miracle, he forsook his bride to follow Christ. He did indeed, on this occasion break, once for all, many natural bonds, in order to give himself without reservation to his Master.

There is a proof that St. John at this marriage made a new and complete dedication to Jesus, in the fact that for the first time he tells us, "His disciples believed on Him." For the original words mean, literally, that they "believed *into* Him." The expression occurs frequently in the Fourth Gospel, and always means a faith which involves *entire surrender*. The aged Evangelist must have remembered with a quickened heart that day on which he had first trusted his Saviour absolutely. Let us celebrate his festival by "believing into" Jesus with fresh and more perfect consecration of our every thought to His will.



### **The Holy Innocents' Day**

#### ***The Qualities of Christ's Loving Power***

The first miracle shows, among other blessed truths about Christ, that His interest and sympathy extend to every age of our human life. He is as really en-

gaged with the wedding of these young people as, in other connections, He was occupied in blessing little children and in teaching old Nicodemus. Probably the three feasts immediately following Christmas are meant to suggest this same truth, that Jesus has infinite love for old and young—for the baby Innocents, and for St. Stephen in the bloom of young manhood, and for St. John. His loving power touches our life at every point. To-day He is blessing the marriage of these simple Galilean peasants; within the week He will be purifying public worship at Jerusalem. Let us strive to realize, on this feast of the Holy Innocents, that no human life is so young, or obscure, or poor, that He does not long to bless and sanctify it wholly.

Our Saviour's sanctifying grace, moreover, is unmerited. The infants, who were slain in His stead were, according to the teaching of the Church, not only speedily received into Heaven, but were also numbered among the greater Saints. St. John seems to have them in mind when he speaks of those followers of the Lamb in the Church Triumphant who have been "redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb" (Rev. xiv: 4). But they were not martyrs in will, nor did their baby souls display heroic sanctity. Their place among the Saints, therefore, is the gift of God's uncovenanted mercy. Yet their beatification was only one more act of His gratuitous love for them. He had become incarnate in order to save our race when it not only merited nothing from Him, but when it deserved damnation. He had turned man's very sin into a *felix culpa*, an occasion of ineffable blessedness. This Divine Charity had first redeemed and then beatified the Infant Martyrs of this day. Christ gave them the pure water of

sanctifying grace in their souls, in anticipation of His meritorious Cross, and then converted this into the wine of extraordinary sanctity, all for the sole reason that He loved them.

Christ's power for good was prodigal toward others, while it left His Humanity unaided. He would not turn a stone to a loaf of bread for Himself, but He changed water to the most delicious wine for others. And the uncalculating lavishness of His Love is exemplified by the fact that He made for these poor peasants about one hundred gallons, of the best vintage. In the same characteristic way, He gave to the Holy Innocents, in return for one swift stab of pain, over perhaps before they perceived it, Heaven and a place very near His Throne, forever. How often during my whole life has this overflowing Providence of Christ poured its benefits upon my soul, simply because I permitted Him to bestow His spiritual largess! Shall I not show my gratitude to this dear Guest, by frequently calling Him to share, not only my sorrows, but my feasts?



### **Fifth Day in the Christmas Octave**

#### **The Mother of Our Lord**

This is the only miracle in which the Blessed Virgin appears as an actor, except the miracle wrought in her by the Holy Ghost when she conceived Christ. So great is the economy observed by St. John in his sacred narrative, that he would not have referred to her part in the providing of the wine, if it had not been very important. As we study the miracle, moreover, we see that she supplied an absolutely essential element. For, in the similar cases, our Lord reveals that there must

be faith, either in the recipient of the extraordinary favor, or in his representative. We find Him saying, "According to your faith be it unto you," and, "Thy faith hath saved thee" (St. Matt. ix: 29; St. Luke vii: 50). Now the Holy Mother, by becoming the intercessor for the young married people, identified herself with them, and on their behalf supplied the necessary faith. During the thirty years of her life with Jesus in Nazareth, she had discerned His Divine Power, even while it was hidden beneath the carpenter's frock so successfully that none others realized aught but His perfect holiness. Therefore, when these poor folk brought their need to her Son, she confidently expected Him to supply it, although He could do this only by a miracle. When He gently rebuffed her, she at once directed that all preparations should be made to receive the blessing which she evidently felt sure would be granted. She knew not what the answer to her prayer would be, but she believed absolutely that it would be both perfectly righteous and Divinely loving. "Whatsoever He saith unto you," she said to the servants, "do it." In this way, she presented a wonderfully true example of the "prayer of faith."

But not only did she make herself receptive of Jesus' benefit as the representative of her poor friends; she also created around her that atmosphere of faith which seems to have been so essential wherever our Lord was to manifest His power. In Nazareth, which was His beloved home, He was hampered by human incredulity in using His miraculous power for the people. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (St. Matt. xiii: 58; St. Mark vi: 5 f.). But the Blessed Virgin so inspired these serv-

ants with her own faith, that they willingly performed two apparently useless acts. They filled the six water pots to the brim, when there seemed to be no use for the water, since all the guests had performed the purifying ablutions. Then when they were commanded to do so, they drew what they must have supposed was water to carry it to the banquet in their wine pitchers. Few greater examples of unquestioning faith are given us in the Gospel than that which was displayed by the ready obedience of these servants, and they learned their great lesson from the dear Mother of our Lord.

Yet this episode gives us only one example of the "vast" faith which characterized her life. It made her willing to become the agent of the Incarnation. And, from Jesus' Birth onward, it always spread around her the blessed contagion of belief in Him, without which He would have come, all-beautiful and perfect as He was, into a world of blind men. Shall we not love this dear Virgin Mother, and earnestly strive to imitate her?



### **Sixth Day in the Christmas Octave**

#### **Christ's Most Excellent Wine**

Our most merciful Saviour has from the first, from the time He made Adam out of the earth, been willing to use inferior materials to help us. He has given us an instance of this characteristic in His condescending to employ the water intended for foot-washing and ceremonial ablutions as the means for His first great miracle. With far greater humility, but of this same gracious kind, He assumed the likeness of sinful flesh in His Incarnation. Indeed the Gospel reveals clearly and in detail the fact that He so far stooped in taking

our human nature, that. He even willed to be born of a family in which had been very great and notorious sinners. Tamar, Rahab, and Bathsheba are the prominent ancestresses in His genealogy, not Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel (St. Matt. i: 3, 5, 6). It seems plain that he endured the special mortification of accepting descent from progenitors who were even notably inferior, for the purpose of showing that it is His glory to take the poorest materials and convert them to the noblest and most loving uses.

Moreover, the wine which He furnished was far better than that which had been provided by the host, good as this latter probably was. In this particular, His miracle is symbolic of the truth that, by the power of His sacraments and His example, He imparts to His people holiness far superior to the highest development of character among pagans ancient or modern. No doubt it is possible, especially for those who live within the sphere of the Church's influence, and benefit by the diffused power of Her Gospel, to develop character of a very impressive kind, greatly esteemed by many who view it. But the humility, penitence and love toward God, which spring from the conviction that every thing good in us is wrought solely by the miracle of Jesus' power—these essential qualities of the only true holiness in this world are found nowhere but in the souls of Christians. They spring from the realization that our Saviour has taken these poor stone water-jars of our hearts, which were all we had to furnish Him, and has filled them with His best wine, His sanctifying grace.

Modern writers have attempted to compare our Lord with the greatest and noblest human teachers. But not only is He superior to them in degree, as is ad-

mitted on all hands; He is absolutely different from them in kind. It has been truly said, that where Socrates brings an argument to meet an objection, Jesus brings a Nature to meet a nature, and a whole Being filled with light to meet a whole being that error has filled with darkness. In the last analysis, it was not by the miracles which Jesus wrought, nor by the Sermon on the Mount, that the world has been revolutionized. Man's redemption was wrought by the Incarnation and Passion of God. Only because Jesus was truly Divine, can we believe in His revelations as infallible, and trust in His Cross as the Medicine of the world. It was because He was the Incarnate Word that He had power to convert the water into wine more delicious than that of any human vintage. It is for this same reason that His grace avails to change these base human elements even into the likeness of Himself.



### **Seventh Day in the Christmas Octave**

#### ***The Glory of Christ Imparted to Men***

St. John's favorite word for miracles appears for the first time in the passage before us. The Greek original means literally "signs," and our Evangelist by preferring this to all other terms for Christ's "mighty works," emphasizes that side of them in which they are especially revelations of His Deity. Of course, the Apostle realized that they were used to arrest the attention of the people, and start a train of thought which would issue at length in faith. But to him, already a faithful disciple, they were most of all manifestations of Jesus' Divine glory.

Now, there was one "sign" which transcended all others to the disciples and that was their Master's Personal perfection in righteousness and love. In daily fellowship with Him, some of them during all the "hidden life" at Nazareth, they had "beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father." The first miracle was, therefore, but another mode in which He revealed that same Character of holiness and mercy which, perhaps for thirty years, they had known and loved.

If, like these first disciples, we believe "on Jesus," or, more literally, "into Jesus," He imparts to us as He did to them a share in His Divine glory. Indeed, it was His purpose in the Incarnation to bestow His glory upon us. There is a beautiful legend which may serve as a parable of this truth. When the Incarnate Word lay as a little Baby in the manger, an insect, in color very like the ground upon which it crawled, perceived that the beautiful Infant had no gift in His Hand. Thereupon, it crept to Him and placed in His tiny Palm a poor, faded flower. Then the Holy One, smiling, took from the straw of His manger a moon-beam and bestowed it upon the earth-worm. Thus, the old story concludes, the firefly obtained its little lantern. Now we "humans" are, as the very word indicates, taken from "humus," the "earth." But God has come to us to endow each earth-worm with the glory of His Personality, if only we bring Him the poor, half-spoiled thing which is our all. "The glory which thou hast given me," He said to His Father, "I have given them" (xvii: 22).

## **The Circumcision**

### **Filling Our Religion with Love**

"And there were set there six water-pots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews." Each guest of the marriage feast had carefully cleansed his entire fore-arm with the water, until it dropped from his elbows, so that he might be ritually clean for the meal. But Divine Love converted what was thus of only ceremonial importance into a means of manifesting His glory and of satisfying human need. The miracle, when considered in this way, is quite analogous to the method in which our Saviour's charity filled the ceremony of His circumcision with a most blessed content. For Him, sinless, and already named by the message from the Father (St. Luke i: 41), the rite was in itself a mere external ceremony. Yet God's dear Son converted it into a wonderful manifestation of His glorious love for us. For thus, (a) He, from the first, submitted to the ceremonial law for men, with perfect obedience, according to His vocation as the Perfect Man; (b) He began to undergo the whole category of human sufferings, and (c) He endured the initial outpouring of His Precious Blood for men. We cannot know how many blessings were merited for the world by our Lord's circumcision!

Our religion may easily become as empty as the six water-pots. Let us learn a lesson from the Jews about this. For God had made rich provision for teaching them the one great lesson of love for Him. Not only had He given them His special Presence and blessing in His temple, but there were various devices indicated in their Scriptures which were meant to inspire devotion at every turn in their daily life (Deut. vi: 4-10;

xi: 18-21; Num. xv: 37-41). There were the Mezuzah over the door, and the Tefillin, bound on brow and arm at prayer. Both were small metal cases containing the following precept of Jehovah: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might; and these words shall be in thy heart." Furthermore, they were directed to wear a fringe on their shawls, called the Zizith, and by that token also to remember the supreme commandment of their God to love Him. But in spite of all that He could do to kindle devotion in them, He was at length compelled to confess that He had failed. "I know you," said Jesus to the Jews, "That ye have not the love of God in you" (iv: 42).

Shall we not permit our Lord to fill our external observances with that heavenly wine which refreshes Him to run His course rejoicing, and makes glad the hearts of all men about us? (Ps. xix: 5; civ: 15). Conventional Christianity is as useless to satisfy the thirst, either of Christ or of the guests at His banquet of love, as were the water-jars in their emptiness. May He so fill us with true religion that we shall, quite without knowing it, manifest the glory of Jesus and add at least a little to the happiness of men.



**For the Seven Days Following.**

Read St. John ii: 12-25

### **The Octave Day of St. Stephen**

#### **Jesus' Reluctance to be Rejected**

From Cana our Lord returned to Nazareth. He must have expected that after His thirty years of residence there, revealing in every word and act the Divine loveliness of His Personality, the Nazarenes,

at least, would be ready to receive Him with open arms as their Messiah. But St. John shows us His enforced removal from His old home, because of the disastrous outcome of His visit there. We find Him journeying down to Capernaum with His entire family and His disciples, to find a new home. St. Luke and St. Mark both strive to express the bitterness of His disappointment, and how reluctant He was to leave Nazareth. He knew the sorrow and dereliction of the prophet's lot in suffering complete dishonor and rejection "in His own country, and among His own kin, and in His own house" (St. Mark vi: 4; cp. St. John iv: 44). So great indeed was His longing to help His people at Nazareth, even after they had rewarded Him for His first manifestation of Himself as their Saviour by trying to murder Him (St. Luke iv: 29), that He went back to them again, later, hoping that He might find them willing to accept Him. But again, it was in vain (St. Matt. xiii: 54 ff.).

In Capernaum, He met another rejection. For, while here there was no violence directed against His life, they excluded Him from their hearts by indifference and unbelief. Our Lord cries out against the stubborn hardness of their infidelity, and sorrowfully prophesies that Capernaum shall be cast down to Hell, since it is more wicked in its refusal to receive Him than even Sodom would have been (St. Matt. xi: 23 f.). This was one of the cities wherein He wrought "most of His mighty works," in order to win the faith and repentance of its people (St. Matt. xi: 20), and the others thus favored by miracles were in its immediate neighborhood. St. John describes Jesus' first sojourn as continuing "not many days." The same words would be equally descriptive of His determined

subsequent efforts to evangelize the Capernaïtes, and His continual failure.

But it was in Jerusalem that this "Scorn of men and Outcast of the people" found the most relentless refusal to accept Him as Messiah, and therefore suffered the most heart-breaking defeat of His hopes. For this was His ancient capital, Holy Zion, which He loved above all the cities of the world, and the site of that sanctuary of God's presence from which Salvation should flow out to all mankind (iv: 22). No wonder, then, that He was utterly unwilling to be cast off. When He had left the Temple, lest He should be attacked and slain before His time, He still retreated no farther than into the streets of Jerusalem. Again He was compelled to retire before the hatred of His enemies, and this time into the countryside without the city walls. There He continued teaching and displaying the signs of His love and power, until once more the animosity of the Pharisees forced Him to return into Galilee (ii: 23; iii: 22; iv: 1-3). Does it not arouse our indignation and kindle our zeal for Jesus when we think of the repeated rejections which He suffered from men, when He came to them desiring naught but to be admitted into their lives with all the blessings of His Kingdom? But even more in America today He is excluded from our households, our individual lives and even our Churches. Let us fling wide the doors and receive Him!



### **The Octave Day of St. John the Evangelist**

#### **The Reception of Christ**

If it be true, that we ought to receive Christ for His sake, and in reparation to Him for the rebuffs He en-

dures in the godless world, it is certainly far more true that our own souls must have their Saviour for their very Center. Capernaum was "exalted unto Heaven" by His presence within its walls, although it was so hostile to Him that it was to be cast down to Hell at the Judgment (St. Matt. xi: 23 f.). How blessed, then, is the soul of a loving Christian, into which Christ enters with infinite love and mercy, that He may exalt it to Heaven forever! For it has the gift of everlasting life, through the continual presence within it of its Lord God and of His sanctifying grace (1 St. John v: 12).

When St. John speaks of the "Jews' Passover," he implies that there is also a Christian Passover. And, indeed, our Saviour Himself referred to Holy Communion in a way to suggest that it is the Church's Pasch. For He said: "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Yet, immediately, He went on to show by word and act that He referred to the Blessed Eucharist, and would not receive either the bread or the wine of the Jewish rite (St. Luke xxii: 16-20). We may, then, rightly claim the dear Christ as "our Passover, sacrificed for us." The blood of this Lamb of God is marked upon the doors of our senses, that the Angel of Death may pass us by. And in each Communion, we consume Him wholly (Ex. xii: 3-8).

When St. John saw our Lord cleansing the Temple, and the mortal hatred which He thus occasioned in the Jews, he remembered the prophecy about the Messiah: "The zeal of thine house will eat Me up." Our Lord's intense earnestness showed that He was consumed with desire for the purity of divine worship. Then with what love, with what striving after perfection,

ought we to approach the Holy of Holies. There is indeed the Mercy Seat and the blessed sacramental Presence of the Lamb of God, Who eagerly seeks the opportunity of lifting our souls to eternal heights.



### **The Octave Day of the Holy Innocents**

#### **The Spirit of Discipleship**

It seems that St. John made his final decision to accept Christ as his Master at Cana. This is one reason for his not recording the call of the four fishermen, SS. Peter, Andrew, James and John, at the lakeside (St. Matt. iv: 18 ff.; St. Mark i: 16 ff.; St. Luke v: 1-11). Probably, while our Lord was at Nazareth, He sent the Apostles to their homes for a period of mature reflection before they made their final response. The summons, then, came after Christ's removal to Capernaum, and before the first purifying of the Temple. Little stress is laid by the first three Gospels on this call of the Beloved Disciple. He evidently obeyed immediately, as if he had but awaited a signal. There is a second reason, however, for the entire silence of Evangelist wished to avoid describing the occasion the Fourth Gospel as to this incident. Our humble upon which he left all for Christ's sake.

He was, indeed, at the very height of his prosperity, that day. St. Mark indicates that his boat was an unusually large one, for he tells us that the father, Zebedee, with his sons and servants, was mending the fish-nets, not on the shore, as was the custom with the small owners, but on the deck of the vessel. It had, moreover, a hired crew besides the owners. St. Luke contributes the information that the haul of fish was

of unparalleled greatness. Yet, St. John without a thought for the extraordinary catch or for the affluence he was leaving, joyfully accepted poverty and suffering at Jesus' side. Nor did he fall into that snare of complacent self-satisfaction which always besets us when we sacrifice anything for our Lord. The spirit of these four Apostles was rather one of fear, because they realized that they were unworthy of fellowship with Christ. Thus we find Him, for the first time on this occasion, commanding them "Fear not." It was to become the commonest of all His precepts, in His spiritual direction of them.

St. Peter, many years afterward, shows us that only reliance upon Divine help gave them confidence to accept our Lord's invitation. For thus he urges us to trust as he had done: "The God of all grace, Who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus . . . shall Himself perfect you," or literally, "mend your nets" (1 St. Pet. v: 10). The broken fish-nets upon the deck of Zebedee's vessel, and those lying upon the shore rent by the miraculous catch, were symbolic to them of their own imperfect souls. But with them was a Divine Net-mender, the God of grace, who would, with infinite patience and skill, knit the torn spiritual web.



### **The Eve of the Epiphany**

#### **The Coming of the Purifier**

Our gentle Saviour came to His Father's House, at just the time and in exactly the way which would make His purifying discipline least trying to the Jews. That very year, the sanctuary had been completed,

after forty-six years' expenditure of labor and treasure. Surely, they would be expecting the fulfillment of Malachi's prophecy (iii: 1-3). Surely the Angel of the Covenant, now for many centuries expected, would come at last to purify for Himself this magnificent House which His people had built to His glory. For how could God consummate the work of His servants with a greater outpouring of His blessing and His glory, than by Himself coming to dwell in it?

Probably, the very hour chosen by Christ for His visitation was one in which the hearts of His people should have been full of the desire to be clean, for it was the time when all leaven was scrupulously cleansed away from every house in Jerusalem. The Jews would almost inevitably reason that if the symbol of sin must be put away from their dwellings before the anniversary of the ancient Passover, surely the House of God ought to be cleansed from profanation, avarice and hypocrisy, now, when God had actually come to be with His people.

But not only was our Lord's chosen time of visiting the Temple that which would make the cleansing easiest to bear, but His words and acts were marvelously gentle and loving. His scourge was made only of rushes, probably taken from the pavement of the court and twisted together. Moreover, He seems not to have struck the men even with this fragile whip, but only the cattle, for the exact meaning of the original is: "He drove them all, both the sheep and the oxen, out of the Temple." And He could hardly have used milder words of rebuke. The money changers were charging an exorbitant per cent for exchanging the foreign money, brought by the Jews of the Dispersion, into the shekel of the Sanctuary. The vendors of

doves represented a kind of trust which had monopolized these birds and was charging the very poor double for them. Hardly any evil-doing would have aroused our Lord more than the iniquity of these men, yet He says no more than that they have turned His Father's House into a market-place. Is it not a wonderful manifestation of Jesus' tender mercy, that He even condescended to be tactful and gentle with His miserable, sinful creatures?



### **The Epiphany**

#### **The Gentiles in Jesus' Heart**

Why did our Lord come to cleanse His Temple with a scourge in His hand, if His intention was to win His people by gentleness? It was because the rabbinic writings prophesied that Messiah would appear with a scourge for the punishment of evildoers. In His great love for the Jews, He willed to adopt even this, their self-chosen sign of Messianic authority. But there was one way in which He diverged from the fulfillment of their prophecy, if we take this from their viewpoint. They assumed that the scourge would be for the Gentiles, and naught but rewards, or rather payment due, for themselves. Their resentment was aroused by the fact that He drove *their* cattle, cheats and extortioners, out of the temple court. They had by no means realized the meaning of that plain prophecy that judgment would begin at the House of God (Mal. iii: 1-4; 1 St. Pet. iv: 17). As for the Gentiles, His Justice as well as His Mercy required that they should be "beaten with few stripes, for they knew not" (St. Luke xii: 48).

In His Heart there was, indeed, a plan of perfect wisdom and love, for including the heathen among His elect, although He would not increase the hostility of the Jews by speaking of it then. But at the second cleansing of the temple, when the time of the Gentiles was at hand, He felt that charity no longer forbade Him to reveal His purpose for them. "My house," he proclaimed, "shall be called the house of prayer *for all the nations*" (St. Mark xi: 17). We in our poor, savage Scythian ancestors, were then, and had been from the first, at the very center of His design to redeem the world.

If we needed a proof that at the first purifying of His House, our Saviour had before Him the inclusion of the Gentiles into His Church, it would be supplied by His answer to the Jews' demand for a sign. "Destroy the Temple," he said to them, "and in three days I will raise it up." The "sign" He would give would be a double one. They would "destroy" the "Temple" of His Body, and on Easter He would raise It up again. And on that same Good Friday, at the very moment of His death upon the Cross, the magnificent sanctuary would be symbolically destroyed by the rending of the great blue veil before the Holy of Holies. In the Divine plan, moreover, the religion of the Old Covenant would go down to the grave with the temple in which it centered, to be raised again in Christ on the third day as the Catholic Church. May the dear Saviour of the world speedily complete His plan for our nation by incorporating the fifty million American heathen into His Mystical Body!

**Second Day in the Octave of Epiphany****The Penalty of Once Rejecting Christ**

There is a great warning for us in the deterioration of the Jews after they rejected our Saviour at the first purification of the temple. For there is a marked contrast between His gentle words at this time, and the awful severity of His condemnation at the second cleansing (St. Mark xi: 15 ff.). Now, He speaks of the sanctuary as His Father's House, but then He must pronounce that most fearful sentence of final dereliction: "Your House is left unto you desolate" (St. Matt. xxiii: 38). So the temple of a soul from which He has departed, because it has cast Him out by sin, passes desolate from His Father's blessed ownership into that of the miserable self.

God's ancient House had been converted into a "house of merchandise" when our Lord first came to it. It had become "a den of robbers" at His second visitation. So, it is also with one who is rebuked by Jesus for deserting the attitude of prayer and using his God-given powers for worldly and selfish ends. If he even once disregards the rebuke he may go on from bad to worse, until he becomes hardened and bold in robbing God.

At the first cleansing the dear Christ came as a Son into His Father's House, while at the last, He had to sit in judgment upon the desolate fane of their self-love. We know that it cost Him a flood of bitter tears to condemn it, yet Divine Truth and Justice compelled Him. May sweet Jesus rebuke and chasten us now in love, that we may ever know Him as Saviour, never as Judge!

### **Third Day in the Octave of Epiphany**

#### **Jesus Striving to Obtain Acceptance**

Our Saviour was almost immediately driven out of the temple, and obliged to find His opportunity of teaching in the streets of Jerusalem. But even so He eagerly seized the opportunity which was afforded Him there by the Festival. St. John, in three rapid phrases, sums up the reason for Christ's hope that the people would be, at this time, particularly receptive: (a) His appeal was being made "at Jerusalem," the city God had especially chosen. (b) The occasion was the anniversary of the Passover, Jehovah's great deliverance of His people from slavery. (c) It was "during the feast," when all hearts were full of religious fervor.

Jesus' labor during these days is touchingly indicated by the statement that He wrought many "signs" to gain the faith of the people. For there is abundant evidence in the Gospels that working miracles weakened our Lord and made Him suffer. Thus we read that on one such occasion He sighed as if wearied (St. Mark vii: 34), and the Beloved Physician records that, after the healing of the woman with an issue, He said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me" (St. Luke viii: 46). St. Matthew, indeed, implies that in some way our Lord assumed the illnesses which He cured, so that thus He "took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (viii: 16 f.). We should think of Him, therefore, during this week of street-preaching, as spending Himself to the uttermost during the day, and then at night, if His exhausted frame could endure it, passing long hours of intercession beneath the olive trees of Gethsemane—all to gain the faith and love of miserable, fallen creatures.

Yet, with all He could do, He obtained but partial success. "Many," we read, "believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did." They accredited Him as rightly bearing the name Jesus Christ, "the Anointed Saviour," because He had such power over the forces hostile to human life. But what He wanted was that they should believe "into Him," with such complete faith that they would surrender themselves body and soul to Him. Since they would not trust Him in this way, He could not trust Himself to them. Yet He made out of their very hardness an opportunity to manifest afresh the glory of His love for men. His enforced reserve in not committing Himself to them was a proof to them that His knowledge of human hearts was immediate, universal and complete. Of Himself, St. John assures us, He knew the innermost character and thoughts of all men. By this revelation of His divine wisdom, He would lead them on to believe in His Godhead and to receive Him without reserve. How can we ever doubt that God *is* love, when we find Him, in the Gospel and in the spiritual experience of each one of us, making out of our very failures a new way to lead us upward!



**For the Five Days Following.**

Read St. John iii : 1-15

### **Fourth Day in the Octave of Epiphany**

#### **The Incredulity of St. Nicodemus**

The Sanhedrist, who came to our Lord under cover of night, is a typical instance of the kind of disciples who "believed in Christ's Name." He accepted our Lord as a Rabbi, who had been taught, not in the Schools but directly by God. In this way he admitted

that Jesus was the Christ, but in a sense which was so incomplete as to permit of his continuing in harmony with false Jewish, rabbinical conceptions of Messiah. His Pharisaical prejudices, a certain conservatism natural to an elderly man, and a very real timidity about incurring the contempt of his fellow-leaders among the Jews, if he accepted Christ as Divine, all united to make him a very difficult subject even for our Lord's infinite wisdom and patience.

With that infallible intuition of others' minds of which St. John has spoken (ii: 24 f.), our Lord seems to have at once recognized a longing of the old man for renewed youth. He immediately took advantage of this, in order to lead Nicodemus on, from what he already believed, to new truth. Accordingly, therefore, He said, with the extraordinary solemnity which His repeated "verily" betokens, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

The reply of the Pharisee indicates that Christ had suggested to him just such a rebirth as he had often craved, but as it seemed to him foolishly. He understood that the Master's reference was to spiritual regeneration, and this Nicodemus had desired as earnestly as vainly. A man is the sum of all his past choices and experiences; in him is the accumulation of the habits, begun in boyhood, deepened in youth, and made amazingly ineradicable during maturity. How can he do away with this result of the years, and begin afresh? Nicodemus probably refers to himself when he speaks of "a man when he is old." If his physical self cannot reissue from his mother, how can his moral self reissue from the womb of time? His incredulity is, therefore, of a very modern kind. Is there any Power, men ask, which can give me back again the

purity of childhood, or the devotion I knew at my First Communion? And the answer is the same down the ages, as that which the Incarnate Word gave to Nicodemus. Through Christ, and the Sacraments of His Church, lies that "road to yesterday."



### Fifth Day in the Octave of Epiphany

#### Jesus Pleads for Faith in His Spirit

There are two translations of those words of our Lord which our Bible renders: "the wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth." The Greek means also: "the Spirit breatheth where It listeth, and thou hearest the Voice thereof, but knowest not whence It cometh and whither It goeth" (iii: 8, R. V. Marg.). In fact, Jesus intended this saying to have a double meaning, in order to present His teaching of the Holy Ghost in the simplest and most attractive manner. As the invisible wind moves through the world where it will, so the Blessed Spirit breathes upon the water of Holy Baptism, or the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bestowing upon them what virtue He wishes. Thus our faith will not be hindered by the paltry *matter* of the sacraments. We must not regard the poor, material elements, but bethink ourselves of God Who breathes upon them. Nor is it what we do in preparation for Holy Confirmation which is of *supreme* importance. Let us but open our souls. The Holy Ghost will breathe His gifts into them, if He wills, and His Will is infinite love.

But, while the Comforter is invisible, we can hear His Voice. As St. Augustine says: "No one seeth the

Spirit, and how do we hear His Voice? The Psalm sounds; it is the Voice of the Spirit. The Gospel sounds; it is the Voice of the Spirit. The Divine Word sounds; it is the Voice of the Spirit." Even Nicodemus should have heard the Holy Spirit speaking through his Old Testament Scriptures (e.g. Ezek. xxxii: 1-10; Zech. xiii: 1). We Christians, perfectly instructed by our Lord, must recognize His Spirit in the Divine Office of the Church, in our meditation, in sermons and spiritual books, and in the hearts and lives of His holy servants around us.

Another great advantage we have, over the "master in Israel." For he knew not "whence the Blessed Spirit cometh nor whither He goeth," but we know that He comes to us from Jesus' Heart, and returns thither bearing our souls, if we but let Him.



### **Sixth Day in the Octave of Epiphany**

#### **Souls Born of the Spirit**

Like the wind, the symbol of the Holy Spirit, is the soul which has been born of Him at the font. For, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth," with absolute freedom from all control except that of God, so is the child of the Blessed Spirit free. (Cp. 2 Cor. iii: 17.) But freedom, whether of the wind or of the Christian, springs from obedience to Divine law. The precise direction, volume and velocity of the air currents are absolutely determined by the rotation of the earth and the pressure of the atmosphere. But, because they perfectly obey the law of their being, they blow where they "list." And in the spiritual world the angels and the blessed saints enjoy the "glorious liberty of the

children of God" perfectly, because they are perfectly conformed to the will of their Father.

Yet there are obstructions to the free course of the wind. If there were not, we could not hear "the sound thereof." In our spiritual lives too there are, as it were, certain trees and crags and eaves of houses which seem to limit our freedom. These are opposing circumstances, and cross-grained people, and our own humiliating failures. Let us, like the wind, turn these obstacles into so many instruments of music. Every one of them will, if we obey the law of our spiritual being, elicit from us the "Voice" of the Spirit of Love.

Our birth of water upon which the Holy Ghost was brooding (Gen. i: 2, R. V. Marg.) was as mysterious, our Lord declared, as the source of the wind. Nor can any man tell whither we and the winds are hastening. But God who begot us will surely receive us at last, and be our Goal, behind the veil. One thing only is required of us. We must permit ourselves to be "borne forward unto perfection" by the inspirations of the Holy Spirit (Heb. vi: 2, literally translated).



### **Seventh Day in the Octave of Epiphany**

#### **Divine Faith**

Nicodemus continued to be mystified by the teaching of the new birth, and sought some explanation which his reason could fully comprehend. "*How* can these things be?" he asked. But it is of the very nature of a mystery that we cannot understand "*how* it can be." Our supernatural religion, moreover, is full of mysteries, culminating in the supreme mystery of the Blessed Trinity. If, therefore, our Lord could not

persuade His visitor to take His Word for the reality of a sacrament, how could He ever lead him to believe in the Tripersonal Unity of God? "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not," he said to Nicodemus, and indeed to us all, "how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?" The "earthly things" here are the Divine transactions in the sphere of this world, particularly the sacraments of the Church, represented by Holy Baptism. The "heavenly things" are those great mysteries of God's love, like the Beatific Vision, which are so far above reason that they require the maximum of divine faith.

The reality of the sacraments is indeed evidenced to our reason by souls "twice born" through frequenting them. Already the Apostolic band had seen this power of Christ's mysterious hidden grace to regenerate souls. "*We* speak that *we* do know and testify that *we* have seen," our Lord could say, including with His own the witness of His disciples to the efficacy of His grace in human lives. Sacraments, to our Lord and the Apostolic Church, were but the "first principles" of the Christian religion, by which our faith is trained for far more transcendent mysteries (Heb. vi: 1, A. V. Marg.).

Jesus' great lesson to Nicodemus, therefore, was this: True faith lies in believing all His teaching, about "earthly" and "heavenly things" alike, on His Word, Who was "in Heaven," "in the bosom of the Father," even while He was revealing these Divine truths on earth (iii: 13; i: 18). For he could not be mistaken, nor deceive us. Faith in His Word is, therefore, more certain than knowledge of scientific propositions which are accredited to reason, for these sometimes prove to be erroneous. The basis of matter was

until recently thought to be the atom. But physicists are now convinced that it is unextended energy, and perhaps this view will give way to the conviction that ether is the elemental substance. But the verities of the Catholic Faith have withstood the multiform assaults of innumerable enemies through nearly nineteen centuries and remain as certain and as final as at the first, because they are based upon the changeless Truth of God.



### **Sunday in the Octave of Epiphany**

#### **Faith in the Divine Sin-bearer**

When once Jesus had impressed upon Nicodemus the necessity of accepting His teaching simply on the faith of His infallible Word, He immediately proceeded to instruct him about the ineffable mystery of the Atonement. With His appealing confidence in men rising up to the loftiest achievements, He trusted that the timid, old man, "stealing to Him under the cloak of night," would believe the teaching of the Cross. Nor was He mistaken, for when our Saviour had been "lifted up," Nicodemus came, no longer by night, but through the daylight, to take his place with the disciples on Calvary (xix: 39).

The Brazen Serpent which Jehovah had caused to be made for a cure of the fiery serpents' bites in the wilderness was designed so as to resemble the reptiles attacking the Israelites as perfectly as possible (Num. xxi: 8). Yet of course it was only *like* the enemies of God's people and was in fact the remedy for the deadly fever they were causing in their victims. It was in this way that the symbol lifted up upon the cruciform pole was a type of our Lord on the Cross. For He

"was made in the likeness" of sinful man; He was "made to be sin," and "a curse" (Phil. ii:7; 2 Cor. v:21; Gal. iii:13). Yet He remained always the immaculate Son of God, Whose resemblance to the evil things which attack His people, was only in order that He might cure their fiery bite.

It was necessary for the Israelites but to look upon the Fiery Serpent lifted up before their eyes. But they could not do this without seeing the representation of the evil monsters they had brought upon themselves by their sin, and in this way the look would be a confession and an act of penitence. There were some, indeed, it seems, who refused to "behold the serpent of brass." We Christians, also, must habitually "behold the Lamb of God" with unquestioning faith in His Atonement, although to look upon Him humbles our pride in the dust.



**The First Six Days After the Epiphany Octave.**

Read St. John iii: 16-36

### **Monday After the First Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **God's Love for Souls**

It is wonderful that the Evangelist who declares most plainly the love of God for the whole world is the Apostle who was most profoundly impressed by the wickedness of man. Scholars insist that, according to the genuine text, our Lord had said (v. 15): "The Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may have eternal life." When St. John wrote, however, the evil of the world around him was so black that it cast a somber shadow even upon his glorious proclamation of the Divine charity for our race: "God so loved the world, that He gave His

Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him *should not perish*, but have eternal life." He has inserted in our Lord's gracious words a solemn warning that those who do not believe in Christ perish. It is significant, also, that it is he who records our Lord's saying, "the world hateth Me" (vii:7). But for all his clear vision of the fearful sin in the world, this great, true optimist declares that both the Father and the Son so loved our whole race that they willed to save all mankind, even by the Cross.

Moreover, he tells us that God "*gave*" His Son. This is quite different from saying that the Father *sent* our Lord. For when God gave His Only-begotten to men, He bestowed Him upon us, to be our very own. And, since our greatest need of Christ was to have him for our Sin-bearer, the Father's gift of Him involved His intention that Jesus should be our Sacrifice on the Atoning Tree.

St. John is unique in calling Christ by the title "Only-begotten." He does this for a double purpose: (a) He would teach us that God gave His own, and His only, Son to us. If we only believe "into Him," we shall not even be judged; but our sole hope is in Him alone (v. 18). (b) He has represented Christians as the "begotten" sons of God, and he must declare the uniqueness of our Lord's Sonship unmistakably. So close has our Father's love drawn us poor sinners to Himself in Christ, that we needed to be cautioned against supposing that we have been given a share in the very Deity of God's Only-begotten.

**Tuesday After the First Sunday After Epiphany****The Christian Manifesting Christ**

There is a vivid contrast between the unconverted sinner and the loyal disciple of Christ, in the attitude they take about laying their deeds before our Lord. The former "loves darkness because his deeds are evil": but the latter "cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest." It is generally a perfect proof that what we are doing or contemplating is righteous, if we can lay it open to Jesus' gaze and ask His blessing upon it. Our saintly Master, however, knew human hearts too well to say, as His contrast would naturally lead Him to say, that the Christian "*loveth* the light." We come, but often it is only after a sharp struggle and perhaps with lagging steps, when we know that the light, it may be of a retreat or a mission, will show us hard things to do. And even when we have triumphed in "doing the truth," the light will make manifest the plain fact that our deeds "are wrought," not in our own power, but "in God." Consequently, it will require heroism, now and then, for us poor brethren of Christ to be children of the light.

Later, St. John records a saying of our Lord which directs us not only to live in the Light, but also to have the Light in us: "He that followeth Me," was His promise, "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the Light of Life" (viii: 12). Thus we are to possess the Sun of Righteousness in our own hearts. For we are meant to be the "lighthouses of life," manifesting the Light of the World through our personality. Our dear Saint sums up Christian conduct in his practical way, as "doing the truth," meaning that "right action is true thought realized. Every fragment of right done

is so much truth made visible." Let us strive always to reveal that radiant Truth which dwells in our hearts.

The great dignity of Christians through their sharing in the white light of Christ, appears from the august title given them by St. Paul and St. John (Phil. ii: 15, R. V. Marg.; Rev. xxi: 11, R. V. Marg.). For, whereas the holy Baptist was, in his earthly life, only a "lamp kindled and shining," we are luminaries in the firmament of God. Only our Lord, the Day-spring, is more glorious than we are enabled to be through His indwelling.

### **Wednesday After the First Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Practising Evil and Doing the Truth**

Who are the most practical people in the world? Are they the Christians, represented, let us suppose, by religious, or are they, perhaps, successful business men of the kind whose highest aspiration is to see their stocks swiftly rising? St. John solved this question in the passage we have been considering. Let us examine his answer carefully.

It is conveyed in his contrast between those who "practice evil deeds" and those who "do the truth." The former verb, in the original, has the idea of busy activity, of restless energy; the latter expresses quiet accomplishment. The results gained by the one are many and evil; while the other performs but a single life-work, which, however, increases the total of Divine Truth, in the world. All the various products of godless striving after selfish gain will perish; the one fruit (Gal. v: 22) of the "children of light" has the everlasting permanence of Him Who is Truth.

St. John's principles of practical business are most solemnly confirmed by our Lord (v: 29). In revealing the Final Judgment, He said that "they who have done good shall come forth from their graves unto the resurrection of life; and they that have practiced evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Let us, then, be true capitalists, and give our labor with eager avarice to the eternal work of Truth, which is wrought in God and shall remain.



### **Thursday After the First Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Jesus May Will Our Failure**

It appears that in the beginning of our Lord's Ministry, both He and His Forerunner baptized in the same locality. Presently, however, it began to be said that Jesus' ministration brought greater blessings than John's, whereupon arose the "question about purifying," that is, about the relative value of the two baptisms. The ardent loyalty of the Baptist's disciples was fired to jealous anger by seeing the multitude leaving their master and going to Christ, and they came to St. John complaining. Let us study their indictment of our Lord. First they protest that He, Who has now become the cause of their master's failure, had been with him in the midst of his success "beyond Jordan." Why then was He interfering with the ministry which was evidently so efficient and so full of promise for the conversion of God's people? Ought He to have established Himself in the very same neighborhood with His successful fellow-laborer, when this would surely lead to the lessening of his holy influence for righteousness and piety? This is the

sort of doubts which are always likely to assail us, also, when our Lord lets us fail, ignominiously, perhaps, just when we were in the midst of some apparently successful work for Him.

In the second place, the objectors pointed out that Christ was the very One to Whom their master had borne witness before the multitude, which as St. Matthew tells us, had included the population of "Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan" (iii: 5). Why then, did He not bear witness to His Forerunner? Often this question also will intrude itself upon us when, either in our own case, or in that of some other servant of Jesus, we see faithful, loyal, humble service rewarded, not by success and honor, but by failure and obscurity, possibly even by the deprivation of the very power of continuing the work.

The last charge was that 'all men were coming to Christ.' But in this lies our consolation when we fail. For we may be sure, always, that, in the perfect Wisdom of our Master, even our failures in the work of our vocation will somehow help in bringing the world to the feet of Jesus. His one desire was that all men should come to Him, and by whatever agency this is accomplished, even if it be through the defeat of all our own plans, we attain thereby a share in God's own perfect success.



### **Friday After the First Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **St. John Baptist Willing to Fail**

Jesus' Herald met the jealous complaints of his followers by showing them three reasons for his being not only willing, but glad, to fail when it was his

Master's wish. First, he could claim no authority, or preferment, except that which had been given him, and, as he had always told them, his was not the vocation of the Christ. Thus he gently reminded them that he had always taken the lowest possible place in Jesus' service. The rabbis said: "Every office which a servant will do for his master, a scholar should perform for his teacher, except loosing his sandal-thong." But St. John insisted that he was unworthy even to do this lowliest servile duty for the Son of God. If, therefore, he was less than Jesus' slave, how could he object to his Master letting him fail if He pleased?

But, poor menial as he was in himself, he had been chosen by Christ to be His "friend" at His nuptials with His people. This was the second of St. John's reasons for his willingness to see his success dwindle to nothing. To his contemporaries, his metaphor meant that the passing of his disciples to Jesus was the marriage for which he had sought the Bride and made the preparations. Now that he could hear the Voice of the Bridegroom, leading His lowly spouse Homeward, his joy was fulfilled.

Finally, he contended, it *must* be that Messiah should increase, while he decreased. As he spoke, he knew that imprisonment and martyrdom were hanging over him, for before this he had denounced Herod's wicked marriage. His "decrease" would be through long languishing in Machærus and perishing at last by the axe, at midnight. Yet his joy was fulfilled, for he knew that Jesus would "increase" through his final testimony to righteousness, sealed with his blood. Then let this be our sole concern, as it was his, that the King have His blessed will with His slaves, who are yet His friends (xv: 15), for He will surely

use even our failures and disasters in His Service, to draw souls into eternal union with Himself.



### **Saturday After the First Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ Superior to All Human Teachers**

The Roman Empire, in St. John's day, was full of pagan and Jewish teachers, some of them men of considerable ability. No doubt there was, too, the same temptation then that there is now, to prefer some Oriental "mystic," or brilliant ethical culturist to Jesus Christ, with His simple, severe Gospel. Accordingly, the aged Apostle seeks to guard his "little children" against allowing any such human master to seduce them from their allegiance to Christ. In Origen, doctrine, and Being, he tells them, our Lord is as far above all these savants as Heaven is above earth (v. 31). To people in the plain of mere natural reason it might look as if the loftiest heights of human genius towered up into the very Sun of Righteousness, but to him on the mountain-top it was evident that the glorious Dayspring was at an immeasurable distance above even the most gigantic intellects of men.

To make this infinite superiority of our Lord clearer to ourselves, let us compare the most splendid human genius with Him: (a) It is the productions of the poet or painter or musician which we prize often without caring about the author; it is the Personality, not the masterpieces, of Christ, for which ten thousand times ten thousand have joyfully given life itself. (b) There are degrees of genius; we cannot imagine there being less or more of Jesus' holiness and love—His

"incommunicable splendor." (c) The great ones of earth keep us, awe-struck, at a distance; the humblest "claim Christ for themselves, and themselves for Christ." (d) Genius wins our admiration; Jesus Christ receives our worship.

Even the inspired prophets were far inferior to Him, for they received the Holy Ghost in "portions," so that they were infallible only in their contribution to Holy Scripture (Num. xi:17; 2 Kings ii:9). But to Christ, God gave "not the Spirit by measure." Therefore, even apart from His Godhead, He could speak only "the Words of God." Shall we then believe the fabulous wonders of false cults, and reject the mysteries of His kingdom! Shall we not rather live by every Word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of the God-Man!



**The Second Week After the Epiphany Octave.**

Read St. John iv: 1-42

**The Second Sunday After Epiphany**

**Christ's Eagerness to Gain Every Soul**

Our Lord was worn out with His journey from Judea, and many days' fasting, and He lay "thus," that is in a posture of utter weariness, on the curb of the well. He was wearing the garments of a Jerusalem Rabbi, it seems, and the seamless robe which was peculiar to high priests. Then came the woman. There was every reason for her to fear and distrust Him—a Jew, from Jerusalem of all places; a member of that haughty group of her people's enemies, the Rabbis; and above all, a high priest. Yet, in the eyes of this Rabbi was a look which from the first disposed her to confide in Him.

How winningly He began to seek her soul! The way of ways to disarm her was to ask her a favor. Therefore, He Who owned the whole universe appealed to His creature for refreshment. And we see how successful this device of love was from the way in which He speedily overcame her Samaritan suspicion and reserve.

As the interview proceeds, there are many instances of the great care He took to gain her. The most notable of these is His suggestion to her of the Fatherhood of God (*vv.* 21-23). She had never before thought of herself as the child of God. Is it not wonderful to behold the eternal Creator seeking by every device of love to gain the faith of His own creature? And yet every one of us is being besieged day after day by this same Infinite Personal Love.



### **Monday After the Second Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Jesus' Favorites**

It will convince us more perfectly that our Lord is ever seeking every human soul with all His boundless tenderness and wisdom, if we study the degraded state of the Samaritan woman. For she, like all her people, was a schismatic and a heretic, who rejected all of the Old Testament except the Five Books of Moses (*v.* 22). Moreover, she was an inhabitant of "Sychar," which was a nickname, probably, for Shechem, meaning "the City of the Liar," or "of the Drunkard." Such a nickname probably indicates that the village was especially degraded, even for Samaria. Finally, she was a fallen woman—from the demi-monde of

Sychar (*v.* 16 f.)—who had come out to this more distant and deeper well instead of going to the more convenient one on the other side of the village, in order to be alone and escape the scorn of her fellow-townpeople.

The charity of our Lord for her appears the more strikingly as we observe the amazement which it created in the Apostles (*v.* 27). For it was clean contrary to the custom of the rabbis that He should speak with a woman at all. They said: "A man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even if she is his wife." But the Twelve found their Master speaking with this woman, and that, as St. John's words show, in the simplest and kindest manner, without a trace of hauteur or condescension. Moreover, He was evidently instructing her in religion, whereas the current opinion in Jerusalem was that "it were better to burn the words of the Law than to deliver them to a woman." In fact, dear Jesus broke through many contemporary conventions, in order to reach this poor needy soul.

Famishing and starving as He was, He forgot both hunger and thirst in His ardent love for one ignorant, obscure, sinner. Well has it been said that in His Ministry His favorites seem always to have been "the last, the least, the lost." May He find us all among the last and the least, and united with Him in love of the lost!



**Tuesday After the Second Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**Christ's Precious Gift for Every Soul**

To the astonishment of the woman, our Lord, almost immediately after He had asked her for water,

declared that in reality it was she who needed to ask a draught of "living water" from Him. Their positions were in reality the reverse of what they seemed. It is as if He said to her: "It is Thou who art weary and foot-sore and parched, close to the well and yet unable to drink; it is I who can give thee the Living Water which will quench thy thirst forever." Now, the water was sanctifying grace, the principle of spiritual life; the Well was His Own Soul, and the empty vessel was hers.

In order to make, not the woman only, but all of us, crave this "gift of God," our Saviour goes on to contrast the "living water" with the water of Jacob's well, which represents all temporal blessings. This satisfies, without satiety; that slaked thirst only for a moment. This is a well freely given, and leaping up within the soul; that was inaccessible without great effort. This is eternal in its value; that was only transitory.

To accentuate His divine largess still more, Christ developed His image of the spiritual well in this wonderful way: It is as a spring of water, always a mysterious thing to the ancients, which therefore indicates that grace is from the mysterious source of His Soul. It leaps up like a live thing, so prodigally abundant is the supply from Him. The overflow is not lost, but, we may suppose, is caught in the vessels of other souls, since it is safe for eternity. Let us then eagerly echo the plea of the Samaritan, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not" forever.



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**Wednesday After the Second Sunday  
After Epiphany****The Nature of God**

St. John tells us, in his Gospel and First Epistle, all we know about the essential Being of God. There are three magnificent revelations of the Divine Nature in these sacred writings, and they are our Evangelist's priceless gift to Christian theology. "God is a spirit" is the first of these. In Him is no material thing which can modify the absolute and infinite perfection of His Nature. Our Lord declared this glorious truth to us, in order to draw from it the practical inference that we must worship our God "in spirit and in truth." The Christian must, therefore, approach the pure Spirit of God, himself purified from all clinging to material things, and filled, so far as is possible for him, with true worship and love.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all," says the epistle again (1 St. John i: 5). With St. John light is always the symbol of purity, and this statement of his means that the Divine Nature is ineffably Holy. And he demands of us, whose glorious vocation it is to be like God, that we shall let this Divine Light permeate our souls through and through.

"God is love" is the beloved disciple's final revelation of the Nature of the Deity (1 St. John iv: 8, 16). If God were only Spirit, His aloofness from us, poor earth-worms, would be so awful that we would hardly dare go nigh Him; and if He were only Light, His infinite Holiness would be unbearable to corrupt creatures. But since He is Love, He cannot be contented to remain aloof, but must come to us, in a material Nature, that He may communicate His Holiness to us.

The cause of the Incarnation, therefore, was the Infinite tenderness of God. It is His supreme appeal, not only for worship and Holiness, but for love for Him, like His for us.



### **Thursday After the Second Sunday After Epiphany**

#### ***How We May Gain Deeper Knowledge of God***

The first two people in the world to whom our Lord revealed His Messiahship, apart from the Apostolic Band, were both outcasts, the one from society in Sychar and the other from the Jewish Religion (ix: 34-37). The great primary reason for this was of course not any arbitrary preference on our Lord's part, but simply the fact that these were especially needy souls, who realized their emptiness. The Pharisees considered that they required no further revelation from God. They wanted only a Messiah who would vanquish and expel the hated Romans. But the Samaritan was seeking a Messiah who would tell her the truth, and accordingly Jesus filled her mind and heart with the Divine Light which she sought. In our meditation and our spiritual reading, we ought, after her example, to present ourselves before our Lord with a deep sense of need.

The most magnificent conception of Christ, expressed by any group of people in the Scriptures, is that of the Samaritans, after only two days spent in the presence of our Saviour. "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world," is their triumphant confession of faith. Why was it that these poor ignorant schismatics so quickly gained the clear conviction of our Lord's world-wide love and power, when the

rabbis of God's Capitol rejected and crucified Him? It was because the Samaritans knew, by personal experience, that man needs a Deliverer from sin, not a splendid temporal monarch. Let us learn from them, that by humility and penitence we open our hearts to know Christ better.

These Samaritans provide, moreover, a fine example of the truth that it was the simple people to whom God's Word gave light and understanding. Now, "simplicity is not a negative thing, but a positive and deliberate loyalty to the truth by which one lives." With all their faults, the Sycharites must have preserved an essential fidelity to their dim vision of Divine Truth. Let us but live by the glorious revelation God has granted us, and His mind will surely be manifested to us more and more.



### **Friday After the Second Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Unconscious Sowing for Jesus**

Our Lord revealed to the Samaritan woman far more Divine Truth than He had made known to the whole multitude of people, many of them no doubt instructed, pious Jews, in the Sermon on the Mount. One partial explanation of this is that she had been in a measure prepared, and made receptive to His teaching. In the field of her soul, unconscious husbandmen had been sowing God's harvest. Who they were we know not, except that Moses and the Patriarchs had no doubt done their share through the first Five Books of the Scriptures. But there must have been many obscure servants of God, who knew not even that they were planting for Him, but who had nevertheless labored to prepare His harvest in the woman

of Sychar and her fellow-villagers. Indeed, their conversion served our Lord as material for a lesson to the Apostles, that they also must be prepared to sow spiritual seed from which other agents of His would reap and garner (*vv.* 36-38).

The Samaritans prove to us that we may find a great opportunity to sow for Christ among people whose receptiveness we would never suspect. St. John emphasizes the fact of their remarkable willingness to believe in Christ by contrasting with it the infidelity of Jerusalem. For Jerusalem was divinely named the "Vision of Peace"; Sychar was the "Town of the Liar" or "the Drunkard." Our Lord sought Jerusalem many times; "He must needs go through Samaria." Jerusalem refused to believe His many miracles, His revelations and, His crowning proof, the manifestation of His Divine Personality; Sychar believed on the statement of one poor sinner, who only half credited her own message (*v.* 29, A. V. Marg.). The Pharisees in the Gate of Jerusalem said, with jealous hatred, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold the world is gone after Him" (*xii:* 19); the people of Sychar stood in their gate and said, in joyous faith, "This is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." It seems that our Lord never slept in Jerusalem, but He tarried two nights in Sychar. Jerusalem excommunicated and outlawed Him; Sychar kept beseeching Him to abide there permanently.

It seems evident, therefore, that we Christians have a great work to do for Jesus by simply being His servants, and exercising, quite unconsciously, a holy influence over those among whom we move in our obscure life. It was to those who would seem to be most unlikely to receive Him, "babes," the "blind,"

## *SAINT JOHN*

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the "sick," the outcasts and the sinners, that our Lord declared Himself especially sent. Let us think ourselves happy that we may sow in these chosen fields of His the seed of His eternal harvest.



### **Saturday After the Second Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ's Perfect Trust in Us**

The conversion of the Sycharites occurred in January or February, when the first green shoots of the coming harvest had but just forced their way through the surface. The men of the village were to be seen across the fields leaving the gate on their way to Jesus. It was then that he said to the Apostles, "Say not ye, there are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest." What did He mean? There was only the early promise of a crop springing from the soil before them, nor was there more than the first beginning of the spiritual harvest in the souls of the Samaritans. Where then was the ripe grain which Jesus saw?

In His eyes, the long development of those poor catechumens, with but the first ray of Gospel-light in their souls, was already accomplished. So unquestioning was His faith in them, and so complete His assurance that they would go on to become an everlasting harvest for His Heavenly storehouse, that He accepted them even in the inception of their salvation, as already fully prepared for eternal life.

Such a magnanimous trust in us is a challenge to our loyalty. For we can never consent to disappoint

Christ's absolute confidence in us. And when we behold our Lord so triumphant, so happy, over this first welcome of His Word, by a few Samaritans, we feel bound to take up our struggle for perfection afresh, if it were but to bring that joyful smile to His lips, as He sees in us the first green shoots and counts His harvest certain.



**The Third Week After the Epiphany Octave.**

Read St. John iv : 43-v : 20

**The Third Sunday After Epiphany**

**Jesus Welcoming Beginnings of Faith**

Our Lord had been cast off by His own country, Judea, and by His own village of Nazareth. Consequently, when He returned into Galilee, it was grateful to His bruised Heart that "the Galileans received Him." But the Greek word for "receive" is one which is used here only in St. John. It is chosen for a particular purpose, which is to indicate that the reception thus granted to our Saviour was one inspired by ephemeral enthusiasm because of His miracles at Jerusalem (cp. vi: 66). We wish that the Apostle could have used that other word which involves the idea of *intention to retain* after receiving. But, imperfect as He knew their welcome to be, Jesus valued it as honoring Him in the way "His own country" had refused to do.

"He came, *therefore*," St. John continues, "again into Cana of Galilee where He made the water wine." He means by his "therefore," that, because of the hopeful reception given Christ by the Galileans, He was encouraged to pause again at the most favorable point for

the development of their faith, the village where some had "believed into Him" after His first great "sign." And, in fact, He was rewarded by the opportunity of helping one who had probably begun to believe through the report of the miracle at the wedding feast.

At first sight it seems as if our Lord rebuffed the nobleman, for He said unto him, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." But, in fact, this was addressed to the crowd of Galileans gathered around Him. It is an appeal to them to accept, and value supremely, a proof of His Deity higher than that of miracles, that is the revelation of His Personality. He does indeed fault these old neighbors of His because they had not learned to believe in Him during the thirty years of His life at Nazareth. Like the people of Jerusalem (vii: 27), they had not been able to accept the Divine revealed in the midst of the commonplace. The very fact that they knew Him as the village Carpenter had blinded them to the plain, daily, manifestation of His Divine perfection. But He gave the inferior "sign" willingly and gladly, welcoming the imperfect faith of the people. Is it not encouraging to us that our Lord prizes thus even our earliest beginnings of perfect faith!



### **Monday After the Third Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Jesus and Three in Herod's Palace**

The nobleman who came to our Lord seeking the cure of his son was one of King Herod Antipas' household. Later, the Tetrarch seems to know of His miraculous power, and probably it was the healing of

this sick boy and the cure of Joanna the wife of Chuza his steward which had attracted his attention (St. Luke viii: 2 f.; xxiii: 8). No doubt his keen intellectual curiosity led him to investigate these two miracles thoroughly, so that through them all the love and mercy of God were clearly exemplified to him. Yet, in the end, he and his soldiers set the God-Man at nought, at zero, because they were disappointed in Christ as an object of sensational interest. So it is that some are quite fascinated by the Catholic Faith, at first, but finally they fall away because their religion has been purely intellectual, or æsthetic, and has never laid open their hearts and consciences to Jesus.

Many think that the nobleman was Chuza. At all events, Herod's steward had this child's cure, as well as the healing of his wife, to effect his conversion, and it appears that he became a disciple. Certainly, he permitted his wife, Joanna, to follow our Lord in His journeys, with the other holy women, and to minister to Him of the family "substance." In this way he represents to us those who are occupied with the affairs of the world, and yet give their alms, their dear ones, and their own hearts to their Saviour.

There was one other in that luxurious court, who learned of Christ's miracles. This was the king's foster-brother, Manaen, a man well past fifty, who had been brought up as one of the family of Herod, mis-called the Great. All his life he had been the companion of princes and a sharer of their Oriental splendor and sensuous pleasures. Yet, at the call of the Nazarene, he left wealth, power and a career, to join the Court of the Crucified (Acts xiii: 1). May Jesus grant that His Gospel may become as efficient in our hearts as it was in His servant Manaen.

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**Tuesday After the Third Sunday  
After Epiphany****The Law of Love Abobe All Other Laws**

It admirably illustrates the eager, seeking persistence of Jesus' love, that after being driven away from Jerusalem, and even from Judea, he retired only to plan another method of appeal to His Capital. This time, he would refer to Himself as far as possible only indirectly as "the Son," and speak mainly of "the Father." The Samaritans had accepted Him as the Saviour sent by their Heavenly Father; perhaps the Jews would surrender to this same attack of His Charity.

His Love was, moreover, as tireless as it was ingenious. The Jews persecuted Him and sought to kill Him because He was in the habit of performing acts of mercy on the Sabbath (*v.* 16). His Charity could not rest. In the case of the impotent man, however, He deliberately chose the Sabbath for this conspicuous miracle, in order to teach His people that the law of love is superior to all other laws. And the symbolism of the "sign" was particularly significant of His meaning. For it was well known that the man had lain there waiting for a saviour for thirty-eight years, and this was exactly the period of Israel's punishment in the wilderness (*Deut. ii: 14 ff.*). Thus He intended to give the holy law of charity the supreme sanction of God's own example. Divine Love alone had brought Him down to earth to save His people, helpless in their sin like the paralytic.

The third quality of the love so perfectly exemplified in Christ is that it does the more for another in proportion, not to his right, but to his need. It was the

impotent man's utter lack of means to help himself which attracted our Saviour's tender sympathy (*vv.* 6 f.). In this, again, we see how charity transcends all canons based upon justice. See, then, how thoughtful, energetic and unmeasured must be our love if it is to be even a little like the Charity of Christ.



### Wednesday After the Third Sunday After Epiphany

#### *The Labor of God for the World*

Our Saviour sought to explain to the Jews that His cure of the impotent man was typical of God's Providence. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work," He declared, meaning that His deed of love that day was simply part of the Divine work throughout the ages, and had a deep, underlying harmony with the whole. As God continually *supports* the universe in His Arms, so Christ had lifted up the helpless person. The Blessed Trinity had sent the Son to *redeem* the world; in conformity with this, Jesus had sought to save the cripple from his sins (*v.* 14). Divine Charity is seeking to *restore* our whole race to Paradise, just as our Lord restored the impotent man to his home.

But the wonder of God's love is that it continues and even increases, in spite of man's wickedness and perversity. The Jews turned our Saviour's feasts into crises of His Life-tragedy. Three great miracles, which were peculiarly significant of His Divine Love, this one we are considering, the cure of the man born blind (*ix*), and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (*xi*), they made the occasions of their deadly hatred.

Yet He only pressed on with ever-increasing love, seeking their salvation.

Still again, our Lord proved to us that God attends to each detail of every man's welfare. At the risk of insult, or even stoning, He sought the restored cripple in the temple, because He must teach him the spiritual lesson of his cure. Evidently, his paralysis had been due to some habit of sin, and he must be freed from this. He at once rewarded our Lord by informing the Jews as to Who had healed him—which is another sign that he was as poor material as any of us. Can we not, then, believe with entire conviction, that our Saviour's Providence vigilantly provides for every need of our bodies and souls, as it did for this crippled brother of ours?



### **Thursday After the Third Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Man Must Cooperate With God**

The three of our Saviour's cures, wrought on the Sabbath, which are recorded in the Gospels, were all of impotence. They were, the healing of paralysis in the passage we are studying, of the withered hand, of the spirit of infirmity, and of the dropsy (St. Matt. xii: 9 ff.; St. Luke xiii: 10 ff.; St. Luke xiv: 2 ff.). The lesson is that man is to be, like God, a pure act of love, not for six days only, but for seven, in every week. On the Christian Sabbath, this energy of love will manifest itself in attendance at the great appointed act of worship, the Blessed Eucharist. We can have no share with a God who works seven whole days a week, if we spend all of Sunday in rest and recreation.

The paralytic was made to participate in the instructive miracle of his cure by three acts which our Lord carefully directed; he was told to rise, take up his bed, and walk home with it. In this way he assisted in teaching the law of love's activity on the Sabbath, even, indeed, at the risk of his life, for the rabbinic law denounced death against any who carried a burden on that day. May not we help our Lord teach the reign of love on His day?

After a time, the restored cripple sought Jesus in the crowd, and found Him not. Then he went into the temple, probably to make his thanksgiving, and there our Lord came to him. Not on the streets in the crowds, nor anywhere else will we find the Lord of the Sabbath, as we shall meet Him in His House at the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.



### **Friday After the Third Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **What Christ Cannot Do**

"The Son can do nothing of Himself," our Lord declared, "except what He seeth the Father do, for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise, for the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." This statement appears at the beginning of the discourse, really a compact theological treatise, addressed to "a small trained audience," probably the Sanhedrin (*vv.* 19-47). It expresses in simple words the absolute unity of Will and Mind in the Persons of the Godhead. It asserts not a limitation of Christ's Power, but an attribute of His Character as the Son of God.

"I can of Mine Own Self do nothing," he said in the same instruction; "as I hear I judge." This is again His Essential oneness with His Father. That His power is free from any real limitation appears from the fact that He had absolute dominion over His own human Life. "No one taketh [My Life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself," He said (x: 18). Only God could claim thus to control His own fate without let or hindrance. So jealous, however, was He, of maintaining His relation of Sonship to His Father inviolate, that this assertion of His right to die for us 'of Himself' stands alone, and even in this, He adds immediately that all would be done under His Father's commandment.

Yet there are limitations imposed upon Christ's action by the free will of creatures. He was hindered from works of mercy by their unbelief (St. Mark vi: 5). On the other hand, He declared that His love was constrained by the prayers of a Saint, so that He suspended His just punishment of the worshippers of the golden calf (Ex. xxxii: 7-10). Thus, impossibilities for Christ are due always to the Love which is His Nature, except that one by which human unbelief stems the torrent of His mercy.



### **Saturday After the Third Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ's Abasement**

Our Lord was like a miser, in the way He turned everything to account in gaining for Himself more treasures, that is disciples. Thus, He even employed the wonder which He aroused, by His miracles, in

order to start souls in the path that would lead to perfect faith in Him. "The Father," he said to the Jews, "will show the Son greater works than these, that ye may marvel." The signs of His Divine Power which He had shown them had failed to inspire even the first faint gleam of faith in their minds. Then He would perform still more stupendous miracles in the hope of arresting their attention, and ultimately saving them.

In His almost incredible eagerness for His creatures' love, He had constructed a kind of ladder of faith, as we can collect from St. John: First He led them to believe in His miracles as genuine signs of His Holiness, Love and Power. Next, they would naturally 'believe Him,' that is His testimony, "for the very works' sake." Then, they would go on to take His word for His truthfulness, on the basis, now, of His Personal Perfection. Another step upward, and they would believe in His Name, Jesus Christ, the anointed Saviour. Finally they would arrive at the highest and truest faith, belief "into Him." This involved complete self-surrender, and the acceptance explicitly of what He had taught and implicitly of all that He would subsequently reveal.

The character of this faith He so ardently craved appears from the one instance of the appearance in the other Gospels of the phrase by which St. John always distinguishes it (St. Matt. xviii: 6). There our Lord speaks of the "little ones" who "believe into Him." Let us satisfy His dear covetous Heart by giving Him the unquestioning faith of children in all the great mysteries He has revealed to His Church.

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For the Four Days Following.

Read St. John v : 21-49

### Fourth Sunday After Epiphany

#### Christ's Judgment

It must have occurred to us all in reading the Fourth Gospel, that the office of judging the world is assigned in one place to the Father, in another to the Son of Man, and in a third to the Word of our Lord (xii: 47 f.; v: 22; xii: 48 f.). The apparent contradiction of these passages raises a question which is aggravated by the fact that our Lord also ascribes the Judgment to the Apostles, and St. Paul to the Saints (St. Matt. xix: 28; 1 Cor. vi: 2).

The solution of the problem lies in the method of the judgment. Souls will know their fate, at the last, by simply coming into the Presence of the Father, the Son and Their Saints. By the sheer fact of what They *are* They will judge who appear before them.

The truth of this explanation will appear more clearly, if we consider how our Lord continually judged souls on earth. His every *word*, whether or not it was meant to rebuke, awoke penitence or remorse, devotion or hatred. His *miracles*, like the draught of fishes which pierced St. Peter with such poignant self-reproach (St. Luke v: 8), inevitably laid bare the secrets of hearts. He *looked* upon the Rich Young Man with such great love, that he went away very sorrowful over the "great refusal" he had made. But most of all Jesus judged souls by *what He was*. We ourselves know people, who, not only by word or deed or look, but by their very presence silently, unconsciously condemn what is evil in us. How much more surely does the Son of Man judge the whole human race as it passes before His tribunal! Men

deny the Last Judgment, but that is only the finale of a series which they cannot deny, for it began with the appearance in the world of the Incarnate God, and is going on day by day. It is the fashion in our time for everyone to judge Christ. Let us live in the recollection of the fact that He is daily, hourly, judging us.



**Monday After the Fourth Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**The Two Resurrections**

If we observe carefully, we find that our Lord revealed to the Sanhedrin, in the passage we are studying, that there is a spiritual resurrection during this present life (*vv.* 21-27), as well as that bodily resurrection to which we will come at the last (*vv.* 28 f.). "The hour is coming, and now is," he solemnly declared to them, "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." This is very different from that hour which is "coming,"—He does not say "and now is"—"in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth," the good unto the resurrection of life and the evil unto the resurrection of damnation. Men are not constrained to hear Jesus' voice summoning them to the spiritual resurrection; they cannot choose but hearken when He calls them forth from their graves at the last day.

This then is what our Baptism meant, our resurrection from death into eternal life. Jesus Christ is reigning in our midst. Our archenemy has been so chained that he can deceive us no more. Already we may share

the peace and joy of our Saviour, seeing Him with our spiritual eyes (Rev. xx: 1-4; St. John xiv: 19).

But one thing is needed to secure to us all the precious things of our spiritual resurrection, and that is the recollection of our union with our King. A missionary tells us of a woman in China, a Buddhist who, poor heathen as she was, may teach us the happiness of abiding in Jesus' Presence. She was the head of an orphanage which was about to be attacked by soldiers in one of the recent revolutions. Her invocations of Buddha had proved fruitless. The carnage in the streets around her institution was drawing ever closer, and in a little while she and 500 children would be slaughtered for the sake of their store of rice. In despair she bethought herself of a little New Testament in Chinese and sitting down she began to read it. Immediately she realized that there was a Presence behind her, powerful and loving enough to protect her against all her enemies. All night long she read, and all night there was One Who spread His Wing over her. In the morning she found that not even the plaster of the orphanage walls had been marred. But why should she, while yet a pagan, enjoy our Lord, and we never realize that in His Presence is the fullness of joy and pleasure forevermore (Ps. xvi: 11)?



**Tuesday After the Fourth Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**Natural Revelations of God**

When Christ rebuked the Jews because they had neither heard the Father's Voice at any time, nor seen his Shape, nor had His Word abiding in them, He complained of actual failures to practice the Presence

of God in three ways which were perfectly practical for them. They ought to have heard His Voice in history, particularly that of their own people in which His guidance was so remarkably evident. Then, they would have realized that the whole world had been prepared for the Incarnation, by the universal spread of the Greek language and philosophy and of Roman civilization. But are not we Christians obnoxious to His criticism in this regard? We give over secular history, even that which closely touches the Catholic claims of the Anglican Communion, to seculars whose interpretation is too often thoroughly pagan. Nor have we realized, any more perfectly than did the Jews, our obligation to discern the Divine Presence immanent in the history of our race.

The Form of God should appear to our eyes behind the sacramental veil of Nature. The thunder is His Voice, "manifesting the ardor of His wrath against iniquity" (Job xxxvi: 33, literally translated). "Lift up a stone and I am there," He says to His children. In a word,

"Earth's crammed with heaven,  
And every common bush afire with God."

How sacred our whole environment would be if only we saw the Father's "Shape" everywhere!

His Word, also, ought to abide in our conscience, which means, of course, that we must obey it habitually. For a conscience which continually regards the Divine Will becomes continually clearer; and the conscience is simply the intellect engaged in one of its activities. Our mind, therefore, by filial submission to our Father's Word, will become always better able to see Him, in the Beatific Vision, throughout eternity.

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**Wednesday After the Fourth Sunday  
After Epiphany****External Helps to Love**

The Jews had a complete system of devotional helps by which God intended that they should receive into their hearts more and more love for Him. There were the tefillin, small metal cases containing the great primal text of their religion, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." These were worn strapped upon the arm and upon the forehead, at prayer, according to their interpretation of the Divine command (Deut. vi: 4-8). A similar case called the mezuzah was inserted in the door-frame, and the careful Israelite always touched the facing as he entered, in order to remind himself of the precept of love enshrined there. Finally, the knotted fringe of the prayer shawls, the tzitzit, were also intended to commemorate God's command to love Him (Deut. vi: 9; Num. xv: 37 ff.).

We cannot doubt that God was at least willing to have His people remind themselves by these devotional objects, of their obligation to love Him. For Christ must have used the customary ritual signs of His people continually. There is, it seems, evidence that He wore the tzitzit, for it was this which the woman with the issue touched in order to be healed (St. Luke viii: 44). Surely, therefore, it is proper for us to use such devotional helps as sacred pictures in our houses and to wear a cross or a crucifix, concealed it may be, in order to stimulate the love of God in our hearts.

We must, however, bear constantly in mind that ritual, even though it has the sanction of our Lord and His Church, is only a means whereby we may grow in

divine charity. To the Jews, after all their devotional advantages, our Lord gave that stern, sorrowful rebuke, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Let us use sacred objects as He did, always as a means of concentrating imagination, mind and will upon God.



**For the Three Days Following.**

Read St. John vi: 1-23

### **Thursday After the Fourth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **The Three Feasts Provided by Love**

Our Saviour may be said to have divided His Ministry into three parts, and He concluded all of these with feasts. The first was His Galilean Ministry, which ended with the feeding of the five thousand. The humble barley bread of the peasants with little fish from the lake was the food which our Lord multiplied, and gave to Israelites only, as their Messiah. He provided but a single meal, for the people were near their homes or lodgings; and the Twelve gathered together only fragments enough to fill their little wicker wallets with store sufficient for their next repast.

In contrast with this miracle, in many details, is the feeding of the four thousand, which ended the ministry in Decapolis. Seven wheaten loaves were used, and our Lord, as the Son of Man, provided the feast for a multitude largely composed of Gentiles. Evidently, too, He gave them an ample supply for their long journey homeward (St. Matt. xv: 32 ff.). Moreover, the Apostles filled seven hampers full of the broken food, for they were sojourning in the wilderness and must provide for many days.

The third Banquet was the Gift of Love which crowned the Judean Ministry, and in one way consummated Christ's whole work in the world. This was the Blessed Eucharist, by which as the High Priest of the Catholic Church He feeds five hundred millions with the very Bread of Heaven. For He must strengthen His Own for their journey of life through the wilderness of this world.



### **Friday After the Fourth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **The Foresadowing of the Blessed Sacrament**

The miraculous feeding of the five thousand is the only one of our Lord's miracles narrated by the other three Gospels and included also in the Fourth. Probably St. John's reason for making this exception to his usual rule of not repeating what His fellow Evangelists have recorded for us was that the miracle was of extraordinary value as a type of Holy Communion. He is at great pains to tell us how apparently inadequate were the materials. The buns were of the despised barley flour, the fish were tiny, and both these were simply the luncheon of a little lad. It is as if he would urge that the poverty of the wafers and wine on the altar is no greater than that of the means used by Jesus for the feeding of many thousand.

The people sat down in orderly ranks (St. Mark vi: 40), evidently expecting a full meal, although there was apparently nothing for them to eat. Does it not suggest to us St. John's congregation waiting for the Banquet of Love, their kneeling posture and extended hands indicating that they expect to fill their souls with

Him who is the Bread of Heaven, while yet the altar seems to be supplied with nought but a little bread and wine?

Lastly, in the first three Gospels Jesus is said to have "blessed" the bread and fish, but St. John speaks of Him as multiplying the food by "giving thanks" over it (St. Matt. xiv: 19; St. Mark vi: 41; St. Luke ix: 16; St. John vi: 11, 23). Now, this act of saying grace before the meal was characteristic of the father of a family. And it is in Holy Communion that the Incarnate Lord redeems that promise of His, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (xiv: 18, A. V. Marg.). When He had given them the Blessed Sacrament, for the first time He called them His "little children" (xiii: 33). Thus, while Jesus is our Brother in the "household of God," in the Holy Communion He is also our Father since He gives us His own Humanity.



**Saturday After the fourth Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**Christ's Discipline**

The storm which is described by St. John appears also in the parallel accounts of two previous Gospels, St. Matthew and St. Mark (xiv: 23 ff.; vi: 46 ff.). It had impressed itself deeply upon the Apostolic band by reason, not only of the danger, but of the blessed discipline of which it was the occasion. They had started in a northwesterly direction across the lake and the gale was blowing from that quarter, in their very teeth, so that they were "wallowing" in the sea and making no headway. Then, it must have seemed a strange way in which they were being given their

promised rest (St. Mark vi: 31), besides being a useless venture, for they were leaving behind the opportunity of making Jesus king. Worst of all they were alone, an element of their trouble which all three accounts emphasize. Surely they must have been greatly tempted to think that either Jesus' wisdom or His power had failed them at last.

Throughout the long, stormy night, He had been praying for strength to be the Saviour, rather than an earthly king. Probably the Apostles had not waited for Him but had started across the lake, thinking that He must have preceded them. From His position on the mountain, He saw them "toiling in rowing" (St. Mark vi: 48). The expressive word for "toiling" in the original is that used of testing by torture. And yet he waited until the fourth watch, the black hour just before the dawn, in order to discipline and develop their faith in Him. At last, in the gray dawn they saw Him coming to them over the waves, now visible on the summit of a billow, now lost in the deep trough of the sea, again mounting the crest of a wave like some majestic spirit, and then again hidden by a cloud of spray. When they had received Him in the boat immediately it was at the port for which they were making.

St. John has grouped this "sign" together with that of the feeding of the five thousand, because both taught the Apostles new convictions of Jesus' power over physical nature. "He can support men though visible means fall short. He is with His Disciples though they do not recognize or see Him." Thus their minds were prepared for the instruction which immediately followed on the Blessed Sacrament. For it was evident that He Who could compel wind and

wave to do His bidding could also feed them with His own precious Body. If He could surmount every impasse of physical nature to be with them in the midst of the lake, surely no natural law could bar Him out from the midst of His toiling Church on earth.



**The Fifth Week After Epiphany.**

Read St. John vi: 24-71

### **Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ Directing Zeal**

The people who followed our Saviour on His return to Capernaum were the most zealous of those enthusiastic Galileans who had attempted to make Him their king by force. They had proved their devotion by continuing to watch for Him through the whole night after He had withdrawn. Our Lord appreciated their keen interest, so greatly, in fact, that He prefaced His instruction on the Blessed Sacrament by a discourse on true belief in Him. Immediately that He saw them, He rewarded them with His great fundamental lesson that His people must seek Him primarily, rather than His gifts (v. 26). As Ven. Bede says, on this verse, "Christ flees from those who seek Him for something besides His own sake."

He then set before them two objects for which to work. First, they were to "labor, not for the food which perisheth, but for that Food which endureth unto eternal life," which He would give them. Thus, He would have His followers zealous in their preparation for the Blessed Sacrament. Would it not consecrate the routine of our every-day life if we performed our tasks, as well as said our prayers, in preparation for our next Communion? "It was the Altar that

drew me," says Mr. R. J. Campbell, and many another, like him, has been attracted to the Church by the Sacrament of Love. But how often the devotion of these converts puts our coldness to the blush!

Secondly, Jesus directed the Galileans that they must work in order to believe "into Him" (v. 29). Have we realized that faith is the reward of spiritual *labor*, with the stimulus and the assistance of Divine grace? Not only must we strive for it, and for more and more of it, but when we have gained it, we shall often find it a burden which we are tempted to cast off. But we must remember that it is the "work of God." And, by a growing faith in the Mysteries of the Altar, we merit the first and the last Beatitudes, both of which are for faith in the unseen verities of our religion (St. Luke i: 41 f.; St. John xx: 29).



### **Monday After the Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ the Sign of God to His People**

The Galileans who were disposed to believe our Lord demanded that He show them a "sign from Heaven," by which they meant some miraculous material gift like manna. In answer, Jesus pointed to Himself as God's Sign to His people. "Ye have seen *Me*," he said (v. 36). To their Jewish minds, His Words meant that He was Immanuel, the Sign long since promised to Israel (Isa. vii: 14). But we Christians know Him also as the Sign which is being everywhere "spoken against," and which shall appear in Heaven when the Son of Man shall come to Judgment (St. Luke ii: 34; St. Matt. xxiv: 30). Surely

God could not have given us a sign of His infinite love more convincing than His Incarnate Son, except indeed the Blessed Sacrament wherein even the Humanity of God is hidden under the humble veils of our food.

Blind and reluctant as these inquirers were, our Lord's boundless charity toward them never for a moment flagged. "Him who *is coming* to Me I will in no wise cast out," He told them, with yearning love (*v.* 37, literally translated). He meant to assure them that His welcome would meet their advancing faith half way, as, in the parable of the prodigal son, the father went to embrace the boy when he was yet afar off (*St. Luke xv: 20*).

It will help us to understand this quality in our Lord's love, if we see it illustrated in the conversion of a certain woman, who has ever since given herself to the service of His poor brethren. When she was a baptized Unitarian she was drawn to the Blessed Eucharist, and for two years attended, of course without communicating. At last a Sunday came when she felt so irresistibly drawn to receive our Lord that she determined to go forward for the Blessed Sacrament. But He was beforehand with her, gently restraining her from approaching the altar, and leading her instead to stand up, and, for the first time in her life, recite the creed. How it was wrought she understands not. Only she knows that Jesus came to meet her very first advance, when she "was yet a great way off," and clasped her to His breast.

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**Tuesday After the Fifth Sunday  
After Epiphany****Manna and Holy Communion**

During His discourse on faith, our Lord was, it seems, standing before the door of the synagogue in Capernaum, which, perhaps alone among all the synagogues of the world, was surmounted by a representation of the pot of manna, instead of the usual seven-branched candlestick. Later (at *v.* 41), He appears to have entered the synagogue and there preached His sermon on the Blessed Sacrament (*vv.* 48-63). All the more naturally from this image of the manna, it occurred to the Jews to compare our Lord with Moses. Could Jesus show them as great a proof of His authority from God as the food which Moses had obtained from Heaven for their forefathers in the wilderness?

Certainly, the miracle of the loaves and fishes could not claim to be as great as that of the manna. For that "bread from Heaven" had flavors of both oil and honey (*Num.* xi: 8; *Ex.* xvi: 31), and was therefore far superior to humble barley bread. Moreover, bread taken from the Heavenly treasury was surely better than any made on earth. Finally, it required more Divine power to feed six hundred thousand warriors six times a week for forty years, than to provide five thousand with just one meal.

But the "true Bread from Heaven" which is the Blessed Sacrament, has these properties, as St. Chrysostom explains to us, which make it infinitely more blessed than the manna: (1) It cometh down continually; (2) It feeds all the world, not one nation only; (3) It gives, not nourishment only, but eternal life (*vv.* 33, 51).

**Wednesday After the Fifth Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**The Fruit of the Passion**

When Jesus was sent to illuminate and save us, He was "sealed" by the Father (*v.* 27). In Jewish ears, this meant that He had been solemnly set apart and authenticated, as the lambs in the temple were approved by the seal of the priests, in token that they were fit for sacrifice. Thus there is a wealth of meaning in this saying of our Lord. The Father had "sealed" Him by miracles as His own son, ordained to be the Sacrificial Victim for man's sin. And when, presently, He promised to give His Body and Blood for the Food of souls, they rightly understood Him to mean that in some mysterious way His people were to feed upon Him as the Lamb of God, slain upon the Altar of the Cross.

Moreover, this conception of the Blessed Sacrament, by which it brings to us the crucified Christ, is emphasized by the fact that our Lord throughout the discourse uses the word "Flesh," rather than "Body," for His sacred Humanity. The commentators agree that His intention in this was to suggest His Passion, and that the thought was further accentuated by His promise that we should drink His precious Blood (*v.* 54). Thus, when He said, "The Bread that I will give is My Flesh, which I will give for the life of the world," He wanted us to understand that the life which we receive in Holy Communion is the fruit of His Death.

Still again, He has selected a very unusual word for 'eating,' in the most solemn part of His instruction (*vv.* 54 ff.). It expresses "not only the simple fact of

eating, but the process as that which is dwelt upon with pleasure." There are only two other places in the New Testament in which this word is found. One is where Christ was speaking of the godless sensuality which characterized mankind immediately before the flood, and the other is in His quotation with reference to Judas of the words "he that eateth My bread hath lifted up his heel against Me" (St. Matt. xxiv: 38; St. John xiii: 18). It appears, therefore, that our Lord expected us to find an antidote against the pagan self-indulgence around us, and against unfaithfulness to Him, like that of Judas, in the happiness of our Communion.



### **Thursday After the Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Jesus' Life Given Through the Blessed Sacrament**

Volumes have been written on the Sixth Chapter of St. John, but we can hope to point out here only the principal glories of Holy Communion which our Lord reveals in it. That Blessed Sacrament is Bread Which "(continually) cometh down from Heaven," so that the supply of the life-principle it brings will continue as long as there is a soul on earth to receive it. He who eats of this Bread, moreover, "shall live forever"; for physical dissolution is a negligible thing to the communicant, since Jesus will pass with his spirit through death to immortality. His body also is to be 'raised up at the last day' full of eternal health and radiance, because he has fed upon that Flesh and Blood of which the Life cannot be holden by death. Finally his union with Jesus through the Blessed Sacrament is so perfect that it is comparable to nothing

lower than the relation of the Son to the Father in the Blessed Trinity. (Cp. *vv.* 50-57.)

Our communions must be especially dear to us, moreover, because in them our Lord in His great love condescends to touch our poor stained soul with His Immaculate Soul. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," He declared, "the Flesh profiteth nothing." Only for a moment is that blessed contact maintained, but it is long enough for Him to fill us to our utmost capacity with "quickenings" spiritual life.

"He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood," He said, "abideth in Me, and I in him." For Jesus is both the center, and the circumference, of the communicant's life. We glimpse the preciousness to St. John of this thought from the fact that the expression "abide in Christ" is peculiar to Him. The lonely old man, homeless, and a wanderer, when not a prisoner in the quarries of Patmos, found an abiding place of utter happiness in Jesus' heart through his communions.



### **Friday After the Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Belief in the Blessed Sacrament**

What was it which created the line of cleavage so plainly to be seen in the passage before us, between those who rejected and those who accepted Christ's teaching? Fundamentally, it was because they followed opposite rules of faith. The one group insisted upon asking "*how*" our Lord's revelations could be true. Thus they demanded to know *how* He could say that He had come down from Heaven, since they knew Him as a Nazarene, and *how* He could give them

His Flesh to eat. In the end these helped to crucify our Lord. The Twelve, on the contrary, adopted the rule thus expressed by St. Peter: "We have believed and have come to know." After their example, the Church has always taught her children to believe first of all on her authority, and afterwards to learn the reasons for the faith which is in them.

The operation of the two rules is excellently illustrated by the way in which our Lord's teaching about the Sacrament of Love was received. The Jews said of that most gracious revelation, 'This is a repulsive saying. Who can hear it [with patience]?' (v. 60). But the Apostles believed Jesus when He said that His words were "spirit and life,"—that they revealed what belongs to the spiritual order and gives life to man. Accordingly to them His Teachings about the great Mystery were "words of eternal life" (v. 68).

The reward of believing on our Lord's Word what we cannot fully understand, appears from the magnificent gain in their knowledge of Christ's Person which was given to the Apostles, because they had accepted the revelation of the Holy Sacrament. Before this, they had by their representative, St. Peter, confessed Christ as "the Son of God" (St. Matt. xiv: 33). Their conception of Him then was, however, mainly of His office and prerogatives. Now they knew Him as "the *Holy One* of God." They were still to advance to the glory of their confession that He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" (St. Matt. xvi: 16). Thus step by step they progressed, first *believing*, and subsequently by experience, coming to *know* the truth they had accepted (v. 69 R. V.).

## **Saturday After the Fifth Sunday After Epiphany**

### **Perseverance in Holy Communion**

‘Then said Jesus unto the Twelve, would ye also go?’ He implies wistfully, that they will answer “No”! Nor was He disappointed, for St. Peter, speaking for the Apostles, not only declared, in effect, that they would steadfastly follow their Master, but gave three great reasons for their perseverance: (1) There was no one else they could go to; (2) If there were another, Christ had all they needed,—the doctrines of “eternal life”; (3) In fact, there was but one Messiah, Jesus, the Holy One of God. Now all of these are in substance compelling arguments for cleaving to Him in the Blessed Sacrament.

Again, our Lord warned the Jews that if they would not accept His teaching about the Bread of Heaven, they would remain unprepared for the yet more difficult Mystery of His Passion. If the doctrine of the Sacrament of Love “caused them to stumble,” because they were too proud to receive the Life from God through the Nazarene, how could they believe in Him as their Messiah, when they would see Him “ascend up where He was before” by the way of the shameful Cross (*v.* 62)? Even so, does our Lord, by Holy Communion, prepare us for coming trials of our faith.

The two groups, of the Jews and of the Twelve, stood at the parting of the ways. As the Apostles gained a glorious new vision of Jesus’ Holiness, the Jews “went back to the things of the past,” as the Greek means, that is, from faith and virtue, so far as they had gained them, to past unbelief and sin. There are two ways, in which a disciple of Christ may “go

to the rear"; one is to retire from Satan's dominion, and fall in behind Jesus, as St. Peter once did (St. Matt. xvi: 23); and the other is to go back from fellowship with Jesus and line up behind Satan. Then, let us never lapse from union with our Lord, but ever hold fast by Him in the Holy Mysteries.



**The Sixth Week After Epiphany.**

Read St. John vii

### **The Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ's Conversion of His Own Household**

Our Lord's brethren were His collateral relatives; those whose names we know were very probably His cousins. The ordinary Catholic opinion is that three of these latter were the Apostles, SS. James, Jude and Simon. The development of their faith in Him was indeed very slow. At one time they seem to have thought that "He was beside Himself" (St. Mark iii: 21). Even after they were chosen among the Twelve, they had for long the conception of our Saviour that He was the Messiah of the rabbinic tradition, a great temporal ruler who would "restore again the kingdom to Israel,"—an idea which persisted among the Twelve until the Ascension (Acts i: 6).

Probably it was St. Jude who, in our passage for study, presumed to urge our Lord to leave the country and go up to Jerusalem, in order that the whole Jewish world, assembled at the Feast, might see His miracles (*vv.* 3 f.). For it was Jude who, on the night before the Passion, again asked our Lord why it was that He would not manifest Himself to the world (xiv: 22), asserting the same difficulty as on the occasion we are considering.

Both times, his perplexity arose from the very fact that he believed in our Lord's Messianic authority and miraculous powers. Yet, it is evident that he and his brethren had not reached the spiritual development of many other disciples. For they did not believe "into Him" (v. 5). It was easier for Him to convert neighbors like SS. Philip and Peter and John, than members of His own household. It is, in fact, perhaps the highest proof of His Deity that He succeeded in convincing His brethren that He was, not only good, but God. For the members of His household suffered from the same blindness which afflicts members of the Church, very often; they were so familiar with Divine Things, that they failed to appreciate them.



### **Monday After the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ's Humbleness**

As our gentle Master saw that the assertion of His Divine claims was offensive to the Jews, He sought to reduce the external majesty of His approach to Jerusalem as much as possible. On His first visit to the Holy City as Messiah, He appeared with authority to cleanse the temple, and wrought great "signs" of Divine power (ii: 13-23). When He returned to His Capital the second time, it was as a simple pilgrim with a multitude of others (v: 1). But on this third occasion He went up "unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret," that is, apart from the pilgrim-company, alone, like a solitary stranger. When at last, on Palm Sunday, He must for the sake of His people assert His Kingship, he yet approached the City with every mark of humility.

Moreover, He adopted a new method of appealing to those higher classes in Jerusalem who were His main enemies. He had come to them once as Messiah, seeking only to purify His people, and again as "the Son," claiming the privilege of laboring for them without respite, and both times they had rejected Him. Now He sought to appeal to them as a man of letters, displaying perfect familiarity with the culture of the day, such as was ordinarily known only to the scholars of the rabbinic colleges (*v.* 15). Perhaps they would accept the truth, if it came to them under the form of brilliant eloquence. Therefore He stood forth, in the temple, as a Teacher.

Yet He was instant in turning away the praise which even the Jews accorded Him. "My teaching," He answered, "is not Mine, but His that sent Me," and He went on to say that He was seeking the glory of the Father, not His own glory (*vv.* 16, 18, R. V.), and He strove to show the Jews that this humble attitude, which they knew very well was characteristic of Him, was one of His credentials as the true Son of God (*v.* 18). Thus, in this third way, He sought to win the Jews by humility. In His quest of our souls, too, He uses every ingenious art, but all His devices bear the one hall-mark of His Lowliness.



### **Tuesday After the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Christ Making Us Whole**

Our Saviour is able to make a man "every whit whole" (*v.* 23). His purpose is to bring our entire nature to a state of perfect health, and He accomplishes this through the sanctification of our will. We

can hardly emphasize this fact too strongly, for our mind, our spirit and even our body will be consecrated, if our will is dedicated to our Lord. As to our mind, He has told us in no uncertain terms that he who 'will-eth to do God's Will shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God.' By every righteous choice, therefore, by every obedience to the moral law and by every deed of love, we open our intellect to illumination from Heaven. "To those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and as an ineffable mystery they shall learn in their own experience who He is."

Our *spiritual* state, also, depends, not upon our emotional fervor or our intellectual attainments, but upon what we will to be the supreme object of our life. For our Lord said that he who seeketh His glory that sent him, "the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him" (v. 18). We see in this the great importance of each morning directing our intention for the works of the day to the glory of God.

Our resurrection *body* will be exactly suited to the state of our soul at the last Judgment (v: 28 f.). And our soul will be saved, if our will, its determining faculty, is devoted to Jesus. The world is full of pieces of people, who are all mind, or all body. Let us give our wills to Jesus, and He will make us whole.



### **Wednesday After the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **The Cries of Jesus**

We are told, in the Gospels, of four times when our Lord cried out, from a breaking Heart, pleading with

His people. Three of these occasions are recorded by St. John, two of them in the chapter before us. The first time He was thus stirred, it was because there were in His Presence some who had stopped half-way in their knowledge of Him (*v.* 28). In an agony of eager love for their souls, He sought to lead them on to belief in His Deity. Again, on the octave day of the Feast, He stood and cried, because the people around Him did not thirst for the living water of grace (*v.* 37). His own Soul had been filled to overflowing with that precious life-principle for them, by fasts, prayers and deeds of love since His Babyhood, and now they were famishing around Him and yet drawing back from Him in ignorance of their own need.

The third occasion was immediately before the Passion. When Christ knew that there were before Him disciples who believed, but secretly, because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God, He cried out to them and besought them to believe 'into Him' (*xii:* 44).

But it was when He cried the last time, from the Cross, that He began to receive the responses He had so longed for (*St. Matt.* *xxvii:* 50). His clear, strong Voice when He was dying proved to the half-believing centurion that He was indeed "the Son of God." St. Nicodemus who had refused to seek from Him the living water in Holy Baptism, came forward now, and joined the faithful at His Feet. St. Joseph of Arimathea who had been His disciple, "but secretly for fear of the Jews," found courage at last to go openly and beg the Body of His Master. Is Jesus crying over us? Let us satisfy His dear, craving Love, by accepting the truth, the sacrament, or the stigma of fellowship with Him, to which He is calling us.

**Thursday After the Sixth Sunday  
After Epiphany**

**Christ Glorified**

Throughout the Fourth Gospel, our Lord refers to His Passion in the terms which in the three other Gospels are applied to the Resurrection and Ascension (cp. vi: 62). Evidently, St. John alone caught from Him this conception of His Crucifixion, as participating in the glory of His coming Enthronement in Heaven (vii: 39). The dereliction and agony of His Cross were in Jesus' Mind transfigured by the Divine splendor of His Session at the Right Hand of the Father, to Which His Death was but the glorified Road (xiii: 1). And surely He revealed to us this way of thinking about His own Death-bed, to teach us that His brethren should look beyond the mortification and suffering of physical death to the glory that awaits them, and should regard the eternal life, given to them at Baptism, as continuing and developing without any break into the joy and triumph of immortality (cp. vi: 50 f.; viii: 51).

But in considering His Passion as being one continuous Act with His Resurrection and Ascension, our Lord did not minimize the glory which belonged peculiarly to the Sacrifice of Himself on the Cross. For by that perfect Penance for all the blasphemies of human sin, he satisfied the wounded Honor of God, and by that supreme Act of Obedience He made to the Father an Offering of infinite value. Rightly, therefore, did He pray that His Father would glorify Him in His Passion, that He might thus, by His Death, glorify the Father (xvii: 1). Let us resolve that, when our time comes, we will offer our death to God as a final

penance for our sins, and one last obedience to His Will.

Our Saviour longed for His glorification in Heaven, in order that He might help men in the world. For He would send the Holy Spirit to teach even His obstinate opponents the saving truth that He is God, and to illuminate the minds and consecrate the hearts of His own people (viii: 28; xvi: 13; vii: 38 f.). Let us, by faithfulness in intercession, be practising to take our part in this Heavenly work of Jesus.



### **Friday After the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Our Lord the Smitten Rock**

On seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, it was the custom to bring from the Pool of Siloam a golden pitcher full of water, which was poured out before the altar. But on the octave day, the pitcher was brought empty, while the twelfth chapter of Isaiah was being recited. It was in reference to this ceremony and to the words on their lips: 'the Lord Jehovah is my Salvation; therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the Wells of Salvation,' that our Lord cried out, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink." When our souls are, like the golden pitcher, empty, we must come to our Lord and be filled.

This ritual of the golden urn was meant to remind the people of the rock which followed Israel in the Wilderness and from which the saving stream flowed forth to the famishing multitude, at the command of Moses (Num. xx: 7-11; 1 Cor. x: 4). Our Saviour claimed this also as a type of Himself. Probably, His

hearers would remember also that the rock was *smitten*, sinfully; and in this way the symbolism would suggest that the stream of life flows from a Messiah smitten by the sin of His people. It is this Crucified Saviour Who now follows the Catholic Church through the wilderness of the world.

If, however, we receive the living water of grace from the Soul of Jesus, it must be with the resolution to render Him in return a very stream of loving deeds. For the "drink" He gives us, He demands that "rivers" shall flow out of our heart (*vv.* 37 f.). But to the soul which thus multiplies the grace given it by the Holy Ghost out of the Smitten Rock, God "giveth not the Spirit by measure" (*iii*: 34). The only limit to the Gift of the Spirit of Grace is that which we set, if we receive Him in vain.



### **Saturday After the Sixth Sunday After Epiphany**

#### **Our Lord's Success and Ours for Him**

It is one of our greatest debts of gratitude to St. John, that we learn from Him what we might not have understood from the other Evangelists, the fact of our Lord's success in converting His people. By observing how often in the Fourth Gospel it appears that "many" believed "on," or "into," Him, we discover that the number of His converts was very large and was constantly growing (e. g. *v.* 31; *viii*: 30; *x*: 42). Five hundred brethren assembled to meet Him in Galilee after His Resurrection (1 Cor. xv: 6). The three thousand Jews baptized on the first Pentecost, were very probably of that group of Christ's

hearers who had "believed Him" but who had never gone on to complete faith (Acts ii: 41; St. John viii: 31, R. V.). There is, also, abundant evidence that the churches of Asia Minor were to a great extent made up of Christian Jews. Finally, St. Matthew's Gospel was written for that Evangelist's fellow-countrymen throughout the Universal Church.

This success was gained by methods which seemed most absurd to the Jewish rulers of church and state (v. 48). Thus, they sneeringly suggested that our Lord might go unto the Dispersion, the Jews scattered over the Roman Empire, and from their colonies go forth to teach the Gentiles (v. 35). Yet this, which seemed to the Pharisees "the climax of irrationality," was the exact plan followed by the Apostolic Church with such remarkable success (cp. Acts xiii: 42 f.).

Our service for our Lord will often, like His Ministry, be according to spiritual business methods which do not commend themselves to the worldly wise. But we shall be effective for Him, none the less, if ~~we~~ we are neither keeping His Life out of our souls nor selfishly seeking to keep it in, for Christ working through us must be successful.



**Septuagesima Week.**

Read St. John viii

## **Septuagesima**

### **Christ Writing on the Stones**

As we begin to prepare for Lent, we arrive at a passage in which our Lord indicates the sacredness of the whole Moral Law, and the danger of postponing conversion. For we read that He "stooped down, and with His Finger wrote on the ground" (vv. 6, 8). It would, however, be more literal to say that He wrote

on the great flagstones which formed the pavement of the Temple. In so doing He probably meant to suggest the writing of the Ten Commandments on the two tables of stone by the Finger of God (Ex. xxxi: 18).

Not only did he wish to impress upon the Jews, by this symbolic action, the sacredness of the Decalogue as a whole, but he meant to make them understand the truth that one commandment is as holy, and as inviolable, as another. In fact, pride, although it does not entail loss of men's esteem, proved to be more fatal in its effect upon the Pharisees, than was the breach of the seventh commandment upon the soul of Blessed Mary Magdalene (v: 44; St. Luke viii: 2).

One other lesson our Lord gives us for our Septuagesima in the way He treated the accusers of the unhappy woman (v. 7). For when He had said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," they stole away "one by one, beginning at the eldest." Evidently, they were self-convicted of sin great in proportion to the number of their years. Let them be an example to us that we do not grow good by growing old, but rather by those continual conversions of heart for which the Church provides us these seasons of penitence year by year.



### **Monday After Septuagesima**

#### **The Light of the World**

A beautiful feature of the ceremonies during the Feast of Tabernacles was the lighting of the vast lamps which hung from the roof of the woman's court in the temple, on the first night of the octave. From

Mount Moriah, the great chandeliers shed their radiance over all Jerusalem. But as our Lord stood beneath them in the twilight of the octave day, they remained unlighted, and it was then that He cried out, "I am the Light of the world" (v. 12). Thus, again we find Him carrying the Gentiles in His heart. For He declared Himself to be the Illuminator, not of Jerusalem, nor of that people, only, but of all human-kind. When life darkens around us and no human cheer will serve to drive away the gloom from our hearts, let us go directly to the Light of the World. The sorrow was sent to drive us to Him.

There was in His words, moreover, a reference to the pillar of fire and cloud which had journeyed with the ancient people of God through the wilderness. Veiled within that "luminous cloud" was the awful Presence of God, and by teaching the Apostles that it was a type of His Incarnation, Christ identified Himself with Jehovah, and thus helped the Apostles to realize that He was truly Divine. In the very act of declaring Himself the Light of the World, He was illuminating His own.

Now, God has ordained a lamp for His Christ (Ps. cxxxii: 17). Within everyone of us baptized Christians blazes the Dayspring of this world. He would fain shine through our lives, giving comfort to the afflicted and sorrowful, and persuading men of His Deity. Shall we not begin now, even before Lent, to cleanse the globe of His lamp?



**Tuesday After Septuagesima****The Supreme Example**

Our Lord spoke these sad words to the Jews: "Ye are from beneath, I am from above; ye are of this world, I am not of this world." They belonged to the lower, fleshly, sensual order, while He was from above, and was the center of that which is Heavenly and eternal. The difference between their natures was infinitely great; and, from the perfect contrast between them, we can see with extraordinary clearness that the circumstances of earthly life give scope for the embodiment of two characters absolutely opposed. Be our part and lot on Jesus' side of that impassable gulf!

His perfect charity was allied with two other virtues, absolute fearlessness and invincible meekness, which are found combined among men only in His followers. His courage, which will appear more and more the nearer we approach His Passion, is exemplified in our present chapter by His choosing, for His instructions in the Temple, the treasury, because this was in the court of the women, close by the assembly room of the Sanhedrin. Even after they had set a price upon His Head, He continued to stand there calmly, within easy striking distance of them, no doubt hoping that some word of love might pierce their hard hearts and save them.

His meekness, also, appears from His reaction upon the stupidity and insults of the Jews. Thus, after He had again and again said that He had come from the Father, they misunderstood Him (*v.* 27). Apparently, they thought that He was speaking of coming from another Messiah, who was the one they wanted. And when He warned them that they would die in their

sins, and be forever separated from Him, they, with fearful blasphemy, retorted that He must be intending to commit suicide, and be lost in Hell (*vv.* 21 f.). Yet, according to the correct text, He went on, after repeatedly pleading with them in other ways, to beg them to serve the Father according to their own light, if they would not accept the revelation in Him, hoping that thus they might be led on to faith. "Do ye the things which ye heard from the Father," He urged (*v.* 38, R. V. Marg.). Is it wonderful that such perfect patience won all but the most wicked hearts?



### Wednesday After Septuagesima

#### Practice of the Presence of God

Our Saviour could always safely challenge even the Jews who hated Him to point out the slightest defect in His righteousness. But He longed to develop their admission of His perfection into a confession of His union with God. Accordingly, He said to them, "He that sent Me is with Me; the Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him" (*v.* 29). In this way He tried to make them reason that His absolute faultlessness must be due to the fact that the Father was with Him. "The perfect coincidence of the will of the Son with the will of the Father is presented as the effect, and not as the reason of the Father's presence." But if the righteousness of Jesus' Human Soul was due to His fellowship with the Father, how much more truly must we abide with God if we would be holy! Moreover, St. John demands that Christians do "those things that please" God, as our Lord always did. For he uses the Greek

word with this meaning, which is found only in his writings in the New Testament, just once more and then to require of us the same perfect service (1 St. John iii: 22).

Yet, in the context before us, our Lord says that 'whosoever committeth sin is the bondservant of sin' (v. 34). St. Paul and St. Peter also declare that the sinner is the slave of the evil thing which masters him (Rom. vi: 16; 2 St. Peter ii: 19). What one of us, then, is free to serve God, especially if we must measure up to the standard of God's "well-beloved Son"?

We must let the Son abide always in our houses, and He will set us free (vv. 35 f.). In His Presence temptations cannot assail us, nor sins defile. He will make us "free indeed" for fellowship in His service.



### Thursday After Septuagesima

#### Christ's Pursuit of Souls

In order to suggest His Deity in a way which would be the most appealing and attractive to the Jews, our Lord, when He would speak of Himself as having absolute Being, frequently used the words "I am," which in Aramaic would suggest "Jehovah" (cp. vv. 24, 28, 58). His meaning was that in Him was perfect light, life and strength. He united in Himself all finite and all infinite Being. As a further claim upon their devotion, He revealed Himself as the Mediator between earth and Heaven, saying, "The things which I heard from the Father, these speak I into the world" (v. 26, R. V. Marg.). In one way, He was, as it were, standing outside our universe, proclaiming the good tidings which came to Him from the Father, "into the world," that is, unto its uttermost parts.

But, while He was God, He took His place with the lowliest of mankind. "Ye seek to kill Me," He pleaded with the Jews, "a Man that hath told you the truth." Here He uses the humblest possible word for His Humanity, for the Greek noun translated "man" means a common person or peasant, as distinguished from a gentleman. One marvels that any soul could resist the appeal of this God Who stooped so low to shoulder the burden of human life and human sin.

It is His invincible hopefulness about human souls, however, which most claims our adoring love. The Jews had just vented their anger upon Him by calling Him a Samaritan, and accusing Him of having a demon. Moreover, it appears by the form of the verbs that these insults were current and habitual ones. But our Lord only answered them by a yet more gracious offer of love. Now He promises that if they will keep His Word *they shall never see death* (v. 51; cp. v. 31). Let us then learn from our Lord's persistent appeals, even to His blasphemers, that no soul in the state of probation is beyond hope.



### Friday After Septuagesima

#### Keeping God's Word

Our dear Lord promises us a very great and precious immunity, if only we will keep His Word. On this sole condition, that we obey the Gospel, we shall never 'behold death' (v. 51). He did not say that Christians should never "taste of death," as the Jews falsely quoted Him (v. 52). The faithful must drink of His Cup; but He has already "tasted death for every man" and so has emptied the chalice of all its bitterness. To

"behold death" means to gaze upon it "with long, steady, exhaustive vision, whereby we become slowly acquainted with the nature of [it]." This, which is the portion of the damned, shall never enter into the experience of Christ's faithful servants.

Moreover, in requiring us to keep His Word, our Lord demanded no greater proof of loyalty to Him than He had abundantly given of faithfulness to His Father. "I know Him and keep His word," He could say without fear of being contradicted even by His enemies (v. 55; cp. xv: 10). He knows the sufferings and temptations which beset obedience to God, and He will not fail His brethren either in sympathy or in powerful aid.

Keeping the word of our Lord, however, implies much more than static faith and holiness. Jesus said to His enemies, "Ye seek to kill Me, because My word maketh no progress in you" (v. 37, literally translated). The Gospel must have free course in our soul. If we should set an obstacle to its progress, we would cast it out of our life and with it crucify Jesus Christ over again to ourselves.



### **Saturday After Septuagesima**

#### **The Sympathy and Help of the Saints**

"Your father Abraham exulted that he would see My day," our Lord solemnly declared to the Jews, "and the time came, that He saw it and was glad" (v. 56, literally translated). Two epoch-making events of the great patriarch's life in this world and after death are thus revealed to us: one, the great occasion when Jehovah promised him that he should see His Incarna-

tion, and the other, the first Christmas Day, when he actually "*saw*" the Divine Baby in the Manger. In some mansion of his Heavenly Father's House, the vision of his Saviour's Birth came to him bringing its unspeakable joy. Almost all great authorities agree that this is the meaning of Christ's words. We are assured, therefore, that the blessed Saints are allowed to know what is passing in the Church on earth. We have additional evidence in the fact that, at the Transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah spoke with Him "of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (St. Luke ix: 31). They had been informed of the events of His Life, and knew that He was approaching His Passion, so that His dear Human Heart had cried out for their intelligent and loving fellowship.

Surely, we poor pilgrim brethren of Christ also need the tender sympathy of His Saints. We ought to imitate their holy lives, and seek the aid of their prayers, certain that our Lord makes known our need to them and inspires their intercessions. If it be true, as the physicists say, that two atoms on the opposite sides of the universe attract each other, how much more must two souls in the Communion of Saints be drawn together by the magnetic power of that Divine Love which dwells in both of them!

St. John alone remembered this saying of Christ that Abraham had seen His Nativity. The aged, broken Apostle, the last of the Twelve, breasting alone the torrent of Imperial persecution which threatened to annihilate the Church, found courage and gladness in the fellowship of his brethren, the Saints of both the Old Testament and the Gospel.

**Sexagesima Week**

Read St. John ix

**Sexagesima****God the Pure Act of Love**

Immediately after He had been all but crushed under the stones which the Jews in the Temple would have cast at Him had He not escaped, our Lord proceeded to a work of love. As He passed by the entrance of the Temple, on His way out from the sacred precincts, "He saw a man which was blind from his birth." At once He determined to cure the unfortunate, and through him to seek once more the conversion of the very people who would have murdered Him a few moments before. The "sign" would be widely known, for probably it was notorious all over Jerusalem that this beggar had borne his affliction all his life; moreover, none of the Old Testament Saints had wrought the miracle of restoring sight; and the proof of His Messianic power would be still more convincing, because this blindness was congenital (v. 32).

But our Lord leads us to see even more in His sign. For He declared to the Apostles that His act of love in healing the sightless eyes was but a manifestation of the works of God. His words reveal, as by a flash of light, the vast machinery of Divine Providence ever working out blessings for us behind the appearance of things. God is the perfect, infinite, Act of Love, and the Life of Jesus only showed openly to us what is, from eternity to eternity, the very Nature of God.

Our Master mildly rebuked the Apostles for asking whether the beggar's condition was due to his sin or to that of his parents. We are not to waste time over intellectual queries and speculations about the origin

of evil, but to coöperate with God in remedying it, that His works may be manifest to the world more and more.



### Monday After Sexagesima

#### The Divine Laws of Service

"We must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day," Jesus said to His Apostles (v. 4, R. V.). Thus He included all His Christian brethren in His great labor for the salvation of the world. And this coöperation with our Master is to continue throughout the "day" of life, until the eventide of rest with Him.

If we are to be partners with our Saviour, in His work for souls, we must practice His rules of service. First, He would never seek to be *original* in His teaching; every word was ascribed to His Father (vii: 16). Yet, His *effectiveness* was unparalleled. Even the police of the Sanhedrin failed in their mission to arrest Him, because 'never man spake like Him' (vii: 46). Again, He was so careful to maintain the true claims of God's ancient Church, that He was what many now would call *narrow*. Plainly, if most lovingly, He told the Samaritan woman that she was both a schismatic and a heretic (iv: 22). But the boundless *breadth* of His charity, in His Ministry and on the Cross, included all mankind. Finally, He went straight forward, in the path of His vocation, to utter *failure*. Yet who doubts that His crucified Life was man's one perfect *success*? For it has done more to regenerate mankind than all the greatest statesmen, scientists and philosophers have been able to accomplish since the world began.

It is profoundly impressive, moreover, that He constantly trained His disciples in these paradoxes of efficiency. We find Him, for example, requiring the Twelve, immediately after their return from their extraordinarily successful preaching mission, to sweep together the crumbs left from the repast of the five thousand, searching everywhere in the twilight that nothing should be lost, and then storing away the broken food for their own nourishment. He was preparing them for a still more successful ministry. We must not be surprised then, if, in our vocation, our Master leads us to effectiveness by ways which are quite opposite to our natural inclination and judgment.



### Tuesday After Sexagesima

#### God Manifested as Light

Jesus Christ is the Light of every age, every generation, every person. "*Whensoever* I am in the world, I am the Light of the World," He said, as we may translate His words literally. Even in the Middle Ages, when the night of utter darkness and unbridled sin seemed to have settled down over all Europe, the faith of the Church was perhaps more wonderful than at any time since the day of the Apostles. Those who sat in darkness saw the Great Light.

Immediately after our Lord spoke the words we have quoted, He healed the blind man, indicating that it is His purpose to illuminate, not merely humankind *en masse*, but every individual soul. We notice, however, that His method of working the cure was, first, to lay the poultice of clay and spittle upon the sightless eyes so as to *seal* them. Thus He seemed to be rather

destroying, than restoring, the beggar's vision. How often perplexity precedes enlightenment with us! Indeed, it is almost our Lord's normal way to leave the soul for a time in intellectual darkness, before He grants such a vision of truth as it has never before received.

The blind man was required to go and bathe in the Pool of Siloam, in order to be cured, and it must have required faith for him to fulfill this condition. Now, St. John tells us, in a significant parenthesis, that Siloam means "sent." He intends to indicate that the pool was a type of Jesus, and to remind us that He was the One sent from Heaven. The remedy for our blind souls is to bathe in His Precious Blood, by penitence, and in His truth, by obtaining instruction from the writings and pastors of His Church. Then shall we come to behold Jesus with such new clearness, that it will seem as if we have always before, from our birth, been blind to Him.



### **Wednesday After Sexagesima**

#### **Christianity Reasonable**

We must realize fully that our Lord's system of teaching the Faith was absolutely reasonable, in the sense that He so adapted His instruction as to appeal to every kind of human conscience and heart. There is a remarkable example of His method, in this regard, in the way He began leading the blind beggar into the full acceptance of Him. For He used the clay and spittle because both were believed, by the Jews, and the Romans also, to be medicinal. Thus, He began on the poor soul's level, with a popular prescription in which he reposed confidence, in order to

make this the first rung in the ladder of his conversion.

So perfectly convincing was our Saviour, in fact, that the problem with the Apostles was how anyone could doubt the faith He taught. Thus, St. John feels compelled to explain why any of the Jews rejected the evidence of His miracles: Their hardness was in accordance with the prophecies of Isaiah, he says; they could not believe because God had blinded their eyes (xii: 38-41). Indeed, in his jealous desire to show that after all they could not defeat the Divine Will, he leaves out of view for the moment the fact that they had first of all wilfully *blinded themselves* to His Truth. It is often a question to us as it was to them, that so many reject the reasonable religion of the Church, and their unquestioning faith in the midst of pagan millions should be a great comfort to us.

"Bishop," said Carlyle to Wilberforce, "have you a creed?" "Yes," said the bishop, "I have a creed and the older I grow, the firmer it becomes. There is only one thing that staggers me. It is the slow progress the creed seems to make in the world." "Ah," answered Carlyle, after a pause, slowly and seriously, "but if you have a creed you can afford to wait." Surely he was right. The eternal years of God belong to the Divinely reasonable truth of our religion.



### Thursday After Sexagesima

#### Sacred Memories

Opened eyes had greatly changed the face of the blind man, as St. Austin long ago remarked. Even those to whom his features were perfectly familiar

were in doubt as to whether he was the same man they had known (*vv.* 8 f.). There was fresh hope shining in his eyes, and his expression had changed wonderfully with his first outlook upon the beauty of God's world. He was a new creature; old things had passed away. How perfectly he symbolizes a soul which has just come forth from its first mission, or absolution, or communion!

It was what our Lord had so lovingly done for him which gave him the courage to face the Sanhedrin. Poor beggar that he was, he stood firmly loyal to Jesus against all the great princes of his nation and church, even when faithfulness to his Saviour meant excommunication. He had but just gained the world, and now he gave it up forever through becoming a disciple of Jesus. Excommunication meant, indeed, that no one would come within arm's length of him, or give him shelter or food. Let us treasure our sacred memories, that we may be loyal to our Redeemer against all the temptations of the unbelieving world.

Observe his rapid progress in faith, because he had made a sacrifice for his religion. At first he knew our Lord only as "a man called Jesus," but almost at once he saw in Him "a prophet," and then "a man of God." Finally, he reached the glorious climax of faith by believing "into" the Son of Man, at the same time that he adored Him as Divine. Thus it is that by often dwelling upon God's past mercies to us, we gain courage to make sacrifices for our religion, and so "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Friday After Sexagesima****The Folly of Unbelief**

The Pharisees knew well how they should "give glory to God" (*v.* 24). "The phrase assumes that the glory of God is always promoted by manifestation of the truth." Thus it would be to His praise, if they confessed that they had been in error and sin, and turned from their stubborn unbelief. None knew better than they that this was the ancient meaning of their exhortation to the man who had been blind (*cp.* Josh. vii: 19). Yet the only use they made of it was to tempt the poor beggar to repudiate his Lord as "a sinner." They transmitted the light of God's Word; but they were like lenses of ice, which concentrate the sun's rays upon tinder so as to kindle it, while they remain unmelted.

The folly of their unbelief appears, moreover, from their confession that they knew not from whence Jesus had come. This was the most vital of questions to them, as to all men, and our Lord had striven to prove to them the truth of His claim that He had come from Heaven. Yet, with all their learning, they were still ignorant of His Divine Origin. But the poor beggar, whose congenital blindness, they said, showed that he had been born in sin and lay under God's curse, knew that the One Who had opened his eyes must be from God (*v.* 33).

The cardinal error of these Jewish leaders, however, was that they were absolutely satisfied with their knowledge of Divine revelation, when in fact they had stopped half way to the truth and were stubbornly refusing to go further (*vv.* 40 f.). They said "We see," meaning that they had caught from the Old

Testament a certain vision of the Messiah, in which He was to be a great human conqueror, and the monarch of Israel. They would have none of the "Mighty God," who was to be also the Suffering Servant, in those same inspired prophecies (Isa. ix: 6; liii). Consequently, they would not accept their Saviour when He came, and 'their sin remained.' Are we contenting ourselves with a partial knowledge of our Bible and Prayer Book? Let us humbly confess to Jesus our blindness and beseech Him to open our eyes to all the glories of His truth.



### Saturday After Sexagesima

#### A Stone Rejected and Chosen

In casting out him to whom Christ had given sight, the Jews heaped upon his personality every mark of scorn. 'Thou wast altogether born in sins,' they taunted him, 'and dost *thou*, the beggar, marked out from birth as an evil thing,—dost *thou* teach us?' But when Jesus had found him He said unto him, 'Dost *thou*, thou the infinitely precious soul, whom I love with unique, individual, Personal devotion,—dost thou cast thyself with complete trust upon the Son of Man?' (v. 35, A. V. Marg.). Both addressed him by the emphatic personal pronoun, bringing out his individuality in high relief, the Pharisees to stress his utter unworthiness, and our Lord to suggest his incalculable value to the God of Love.

As a sign of how greatly He prized the poor beggar, our Lord sought him out in order to complete in him that "work of God" which is faith (vi: 29). As

before He had opened the eyes of his body, so now He opened the eyes of his soul.

All about them were the great stones which were meant for the temple. But at Jesus' feet lay a stone chosen for the eternal walls of the Catholic Church. With the poor beggar, excommunicated by the Jews and now prostrate before the Son of Man, the Saviour of humankind, "Who gathers up in Himself, Who bears and Who transfigures all that is common to man," the new Universal Society, in which "there is neither Jew nor Greek," was begun. How priceless to Jesus, then, may be any obscure soul if only it has cast itself upon Him in entire self-surrender!



*For the Nine Days Following.*

Read St. John x

### **Quinquagesima**

#### **The Good Shepherd**

St. John is unique among the Evangelists in that he has not recorded any of Christ's parables. He alone, however, has preserved for us three priceless allegories. The parables were not so much to his purpose, because they are concerned with the more fundamental teachings of Christianity, and he wrote for a Church which was familiar with these. The allegories, on the other hand, express the great cardinal principle of the Fourth Gospel, the Personal relation of the Saviour to every individual member of the Divine Society. And the very occasion of this most precious allegory on the Good Shepherd and His flock illustrates admirably that very conception of Christ's boundless care for everyone of His Own which the discourse itself was meant to teach. For He was

stirred to the wonderful eloquence and ineffable tenderness it manifests, by no greater cause than the reception into His little group of disciples of one excommunicated mendicant.

The false shepherds were the Pharisees. They had for years passed this poor sheep by at the temple gate, yet no one of them had deigned to know him; but here was the Good Shepherd, Who knows each sheep by name. They had "slammed the door of blessing" in His face; Jesus said to him, "*I am the Door.*"

He admitted this newly-found sheep into such unspeakably close intimacy with Himself, that it could only be compared to that which exists in perfection between the Father and the Son in the Blessed Trinity (*vv.* 14 f., A. V. Marg.). Does it not make Lent indeed a "dear feast," that we are to spend it with this King of Love Who is our Shepherd?



### **Monday After Quinquagesima**

#### **The Sheep**

In the first part of this allegory (*vv.* 1-9), our Lord is the Door of the Sheepfold, the Porter is the Holy Ghost, the shepherds are the priests of the Church, and the sheep are the laypeople. The true pastor, Christ warns us, is he who enters through the low Door, that is, who imitates the humility and the willingness to receive all who come which he sees manifested in lowly Jesus. The false shepherds, in their pride, climbed up some other way, which was impossible for the poor sheep; they sought to be saved through their knowledge of the Law and membership in their Pharisaic caste. If ever they went down

among the flock, the common people whom they despised (vii: 49), it was only to rob, or even destroy them (v. 1). Unhappily, it is only too easy for the true Christian Shepherd to turn false, like these Jews, and seek 'to climb up' by way of a cold intellectualism or a perfunctory professionalism, whereupon he becomes a "thief and a robber," who filches, or else snatches away, the Gospel blessings from his flock.

Now Jesus looked to the sheep to help him keep the true Standard before their pastor's eyes. It is *their* Door through which he should enter the Fold. They exemplify a discipline, lowliness and love, which he must have in order to be true.

In these ways especially He asks them to maintain that character of His sheep which will stimulate the rector to be their shepherd: (1) Let them 'flee from the voice of strangers,' by which the Good Shepherd means not only heretics and impostors, but all who have not His commission given at ordination (vv. 5, 8). (2) They must let their pastor guide them "by name," individually, in separate training, not simply as a flock folded on the Sabbath. (3) If they are sick or wounded, they must come to him for the healing sacraments. (4) They must continually follow him to the good pasture, where flourishes the Plant of Renown, beside the River of God (Ezek. xxxiv: 29; Ps. lxxv: 9). If the sheep make themselves thus the shepherd's own, he will not readily become "a hireling" (vv. 12 f.).



### **Tuesday After Quinquagesima**

#### **The Life of the Fold**

There are three fundamental and all-important needs of the Christian: he must be admitted to the state of

salvation, granted spiritual liberty, and provided with the means of growth. All of these are assured to the flock in Jesus' Fold, holy Church. "I am the Door," were His words of boundless comfort; "by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved," which secures our spiritual safety, "and shall go in and out" with perfect freedom, "and shall find pasture," the Food of eternal life (v. 9). The Christian thus "exercises the sum of all his powers, claiming his share in the inheritance of the world, secure in his home. And while he does so he *finds pasture*. He is able to convert to the divinest uses all of the comforts of the earth."

Our Lord evidently has in view the flock already gathered around him (vv. 8, 14, 27). And He said about that tiny nucleus of the Catholic Church an almost incredible thing: "That which My Father hath given unto Me is greater than all" (v. 29, R. V. Marg.). The little flock of the faithful was stronger than all the opposing powers in earth and Hell, because they were in the Hand of God (v. 28 f.).

Their Fold was impregnable because Christ was the Door. We may understand better what this means to the Church, from a saying of a Palestinian shepherd. A traveller remarked that his fold seemed to be strongly built, but its entrance was wide open. "Where is the door?" asked the visitor. "I am the door," answered the shepherd. He meant that when he had safely enclosed his flock, he stretched his own body across the opening. So it is that our salvation, freedom, and means of grace are absolutely secured to us, because our Saviour ever sleeplessly guards His Fold with His Life.

**Ash Wednesday****The Thief and the Good Shepherd**

In the second half of the allegory (*vv.* 10-29), Christ is the Good Shepherd, rather than the door, and those opposed to Him are the devil and his agents, represented collectively as "the thief." The latter "cometh not, but for to steal and to kill and to destroy." Not only does he wickedly take away what belongs to another's soul, but slays that other, and utterly spoils the means of recovering spiritual life. The smooth assailant of our religion, for example, seeks to steal the Christian's faith, kill his soul, and destroy his belief in those Catholic verities and sacraments, through which his life might be regained.

But Christ is come that men "may have life, and may have abundance." In contrast with the thief's stealing is Christ's gift. Where the thief slays, Christ bestows life on those He finds dead. Against the thief's destruction of the means that renew life, is Christ's abundant provision for quickening the twice-dead soul through the pleading of the Holy Ghost and the sacrament of Absolution.

Perhaps there is nowadays no more subtle enemy of the life of Christ's flock, than Buddhism. We do well, therefore, to see clearly that behind the veil of attractive Oriental mysticism is a religion of despair, death and annihilation. Christ came to take death away, but Buddha would take life away. To the Buddhist the direst foe of man, which shall finally be annihilated in Nirvana, is life; to the Christian, "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." How blessed, then, is this Season of Grace, when for forty days we shall be

receiving more and more of the "abundance" which the Good Shepherd so eagerly waits to give us!



### **The First Thursday in Lent**

#### **The Attractiveness of the Good Shepherd**

The Greek word for "Good" in our Lord's most winning title, indicates that He is not only the True Shepherd, in whom is fulfilled the very ideal of the shepherd; nor is He simply Good inwardly. In addition to both of these attributes, "He has an attractive loveliness which claims the admiration of all that is generous in man." Indeed, this revelation of Himself as the Good Shepherd so appealed to the people that the Jews trembled. "Why hear ye Him"? they pleaded (*v.* 20).

There are two ways, particularly, in which Jesus is "Good" in this peculiar sense of the word. First, He has paid down the price of His own Life for the sheep (*v.* 15). Or in the phraseology of St. Paul, they are "the Church of God, which He purchased with His own Blood" (Acts xx:28). Surely, the very greatness of our natural self-love ought to increase the appeal to our hearts of this Divine Shepherd Who gave the infinite ransom of the Life of God for us who were His enemies. And in fact, he had us, as Gentiles, especially in mind, in our Scythian ancestors, the most savage and wicked of those "other sheep," whom, even then, by anticipation, He claimed as His own. By one Act (of His Passion), as the Greek indicates, He would "lead" us into the "one flock" over which He is the "one Shepherd" (*v.* 16, R. V. Marg.).

Secondly, the dear Lord draws us to Himself by

both knowing us, and letting us know Him, in a way so direct and loving that it is comparable even to the perfect Oneness of His Mind with that of His Father. This is the great central revelation of the allegory. It should teach us often to put away all created things from between ourselves and our Saviour's Godhead, so that we contemplate His very Essence as infinite Love for us, and then to love Him in response, with all the devotion we can command.



### **The First Friday in Lent**

#### **The Mission of the Seventy**

It was directly after our Lord had spoken of His "other sheep," it seems, that He sent forth the Seventy Disciples to begin finding them (St. Luke x: 1-21). They were not, like the Twelve, forbidden to seek out Samaritans and Gentiles (cp. St. Matt. x: 5 ff.). Indeed the very symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles, after which they started on their mission, taken in connection with their number, suggests that they were the first missionaries to the world outside Israel. For, during the octave, seventy bullocks were sacrificed for the "nations of the world," the traditional number of which was seventy. And our Lord Himself, probably at this time, departed with the Twelve into Peræa, where for the next three months He ministered to the Gentiles (St. Luke xi-xviii: 30). We can see, therefore, how eagerly Jesus longed to seek out His "other sheep," even during the time of His Mission to the "lost sheep of the House of Israel" (St. Matt. xv: 24).

Moreover, His seventy missionaries must go forth endued with His own love for the sheep. As He was

a Pillar of Fire and Cloud to lead the whole world to the Promised Land, so must they be, as His representatives (viii: 12). If He had said, "I am the Light of the World," He had as certainly said, of His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world" (St. Matt. v: 14). He was the Smitten Rock out of Which springs the living water; from their hearts as well must the blessed stream flow out in rivers (vii: 37 f.). And, as He was the Lamb Who would give His Life to save the flock, so He sent them forth as "lambs among wolves," to die, if need be, for the lost sheep.

Thus the Seventy were "other Christs." Yet we have not the name of one of them recorded in the Bible. Blessed obscurity! They were all written in Heaven (St. Luke x: 20). The names of the Twelve are several times given in the New Testament, but one of them will never be inscribed in the Book of Life. Let us then love our obscure mission to Jesus' "other sheep" as the very highroad to Heaven, and consecrate ourselves more perfectly for it.



### **The First Saturday in Lent**

#### **The Good Shepherd Seeking the Goats**

It was at a time of hope, that our Lord returned to Jerusalem. The Festival of the Dedication commemorated the re-consecration of the temple, by Judas Maccabæus, after its profanation by Antiochus. The hymn for the octave gives thanks to God for this and many other great deliverances, and craves yet one more. It was to answer this prayer that our Lord again offered Himself to His people. He appeared walking up and down in Solomon's porch, on, or near,

His Birthday. The Jews surrounded Him, hoping by their eager question to make Him avow Himself the Messiah of their national and religious aspirations. There are many like them, in all ages, who would willingly accept a Saviour after their own hearts, but cannot believe in the crucified God-Man. Patiently and lovingly, our Lord began again with them at the foot of His ladder of faith, pointing to the mercy and power displayed by His miracles (*v.* 25). But He must lead them on to the goal of faith speedily now, for His time was very short; therefore He quickly revealed the supreme truth of His Oneness in Essence with His Father (*v.* 30). Their only response was to lift up great stones, probably some of those intended for the completion of the temple, in order to crush Him (*v.* 31, as literally translated).

Their justification for thus rejecting the truth of His Deity was that Jesus was a man and therefore He could not be God (*v.* 33). They assumed that there was an absolute repugnance between the Divine and the human which would prevent their union in one Person. Accordingly, Christ appealed to their Scriptures, and adduced the fact that the theocratic magistrates of Israel were called "gods" because of their moral union with Jehovah. We can see how true this answer was from the fact that the "Word of God" came even to wicked Caiaphas, simply by virtue of his high-priesthood (*xi*: 49-52). If, then, our Lord reasoned with the Jews, their judges, being evil men often, were thus closely affiliated with God, surely there could be no such antipathy between Deity and manhood as would make His claim to be the Son of God impossible.

How gently then He began all over again, appealing to the primary proof of His claims afforded by His works of love! (v. 37). Even they were softened, so that when He again declared the truth of His Godhead (v. 38), they laid down their stones and contented themselves with attempting to arrest Him. We can see, therefore, that He by no means confined His love to the sheep. As some of the pictures in the catacombs show Him, He was laboring to carry home the goats also, on His Shoulders.

### **The First Sunday in Lent**

#### **Christ's Return to the Wilderness**

St. John gives us a very touching suggestion about our Lord's sorrows, when He tells us that, after His escape from the Jews, He "went away *again* beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized, and there He abode" for three months. For it would seem that He was accustomed to go into retreat there, when the dear Human Heart needed to be Divinely comforted and refreshed. We are not told of any previous visits to that sacred spot, but our saintly Guide indicates that they occurred from time to time.

It was there that He had received His Baptism. The Holy Spirit had come down as a Dove bringing superabundant grace and power for His Ministry, and had abode in His Soul. The Father had proclaimed from Heaven His infinite love for His Son in Whom even His Omniscience found naught but perfection (St. Matt. iii: 16 f.). Not far away was the Mount of Temptation where He had triumphantly overcome Satan during the First Lent. There He would spend the forty days immediately before His Passion, pre-

paring His Human Soul to pass through that awful furnace of affliction with Filial trust, meekness and love (xi: 54).

Thus, our Lord did not scorn to seek an environment full of sacred associations, in order that, by memories of the tender Providence and help of the Father and the Holy Ghost, His human Nature might be strengthened for its Immolation upon the Cross. How much more do we need to return to God's past deliverances and mercies, when we are facing anxiety and trouble! Let us store our memory with the answers to our prayers we have observed, the Divine comfort granted us in previous suffering, and every other revelation to us of God's infinite tenderness.



### **Monday After the First Sunday in Lent**

#### **Jesus Not Slothful in Business**

One might have thought that even Christ would have been too discouraged by the failure of His latest effort to convert the Jews to enter immediately upon another campaign to gain souls. There was something very depressing in the stupidity, as well as in the hardness, of their unbelief. They had tried to murder Him with small stones, and He hid Himself and escaped them. On the next occasion, therefore, when they would slay Him, they laboriously lifted up blocks of granite to cast at Him, evidently thinking that they would be successful this time because of the very bigness of the stones!

Moreover, when He stood there by the Jordan, at the scene of His baptism, a proscribed exile from His own capital, it must have seemed to natural reason that

His Ministry had moved in a circle and come to an end where it began. But our Great Exemplar regarded not the opinion of man; He considered only the approval of His Father.

His determination to save souls to the utmost limit of His opportunities was invincible. He took up His abode at Bethabara, not only that He might be strengthened to go forward in His vocation, but also because this was the most advantageous position for gathering the results of the Mission of the Seventy and of His own recent preaching in Peræa. It is a joy to read that He was successful in this campaign of His most generous charity; for "many resorted unto Him," and 'many believed into Him there.' Shall we, then, ever permit discouragement? Our Saviour proves to us that when we seem to be complete failures in our labor for souls, we are in fact about to achieve some great success, if only we continue faithfully accepting the opportunities God sends us.



*For the Five Days Following.*

Read St. John xi: 1-52

## **Tuesday After the First Sunday in Lent**

### **The Purpose in Suffering**

The Apostle of Love would have us appreciate the blessedness of affliction. He has, therefore, selected for us the death of St. Lazarus and the grief of his holy sisters, because these three were the object of Jesus' special love. When the messenger came to announce the illness of the young man, our Lord knew that he was already dead. His revelation of the three-fold purpose of suffering is on this account the more solemn and impressive: 'This sickness,' He declared,

'is not unto death, but in behalf of the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby.' It was not unto death, as its final end, but unto life eternal; it was a sacrifice of his will which Lazarus was given the opportunity of making for the sake of his love for his Heavenly Father; and, finally, it was to become the occasion of a new revelation of Christ's power and love, leading on to His glorious Passion. It requires little consideration to see that all our suffering is meant to have this same triple result, of good to our own soul, the increase of our Father's glory, and a meed of greater praise to our Redeemer for the patience and love which men see that He has wrought in us through the Sacrament of Pain.

This is one of the three places in the Fourth Gospel, according to the correct text, where our Lord refers to Himself as the Son of God (cp. v: 25; x: 36). On the peculiarly solemn occasions when He preferred this title of His Divinity to "Son of Man," He intended to bring prominently before us the Deity of His Person. Accordingly, here He would suggest to us the unspeakably comforting truth that He, Incarnate God, has gone before us to glory by the way of the Cross.

Yet, while He has converted physical evil into a blessing for us, it was none of His making. He groaned in Divine indignation at the havoc which death and grief, the fruit of human sin, had wrought in His fair world (*v.* 33, *R. V. Marg.*). And He "*troubled Himself*" over the affliction of His friends; that is, He deliberately assumed their pain, and made it His own. Our troubles, too, He takes upon His dear Heart in Heaven. In all our afflictions He is afflicted (*Isa. lxi: 9*).

**Wednesday After the First Sunday in Lent****Unanswered Prayer for Relief**

Jesus loves us with that same devotion which He had for St. Lazarus and his holy sisters. The messenger attributed to Him a kind of love which is based upon special friendship; but St. John substitutes for his word that which means the universal Charity constituting the very Essence of God (cp. *vv.* 3, 5, in the original). Now, He let the grieving sisters wait until the fourth day after their brother's death, in order to intervene at the very best time for them; for the departed spirit was thought to linger near the body for three days, and therefore the miracle by which He would recall it would be less helpful to their faith during that time. We can understand, then, that He has some loving purpose, when He delays His answer to our prayer.

But often it happens that our dear one, whose life we begged for so pitifully, dies. Let us claim for ourselves at such times the great consolation that the departed one is still the dear friend of our Saviour and His Saints (*v.* 11). Jesus will "go unto him," for he is just as truly now as he was on earth "in a real personal relationship" to his Redeemer (*vv.* 11, 15). How that dear Heart longs to call His sheep by name, as He called "Lazarus" (*v.* 43), and summon him from the "Waiting Church" into the ineffable light of His Presence!

We, who are left on earth, must coöperate with Him by our prayers and Eucharists for the faithful departed. The Jews could not believe that His love was consistent with His allowing the death of St. Lazarus, and their doubt made Him groan again (*vv.* 36 ff.);

He did not need to trouble *Himself*, this time. But, in fact, it is said that the young man, after he was brought back to earth, never smiled again, so great had been his happiness in knowing that he was saved at last from the tyranny of sin. Let us then lose no time in repining, but seek to consummate the happiness of our beloved dead, in Jesus' Presence.



### **Thursday After the First Sunday in Lent**

#### **Exercising Faith Under Affliction**

St. Martha is a wonderful exponent of faith in the midst of trouble. While her brother lay ill, and evidently drawing toward his end, she and St. Mary kept saying to each other, until it became a habit, "If Jesus were here our brother would not die" (cp. *v.* 21 and *v.* 32). St. Martha set herself to watch for His coming, and remained at her post until her brother's death; and then, having watched while hope lasted, she continued after it seemed to have flown forever, and was rewarded by being the first to welcome Jesus. Thus, her greeting (*v.* 21) is not a complaint, as the Greek shows, but assumes that His continued absence must have been of necessity, and that He can even yet obtain from His Father the fulfilment of His promise that her brother's sickness should not be unto death (*vv.* 21 f.).

She teaches us, however, that Christian doctrine, although comforting in itself, will not help us in our affliction, unless we have made it our own. Jesus sought to console her by the thought of the Resurrection. But while she believed in the *doctrine*, the fact of the universal awakening, at the "last day," when all

human interests would be past, did not have for her such personal and individual cheer as to soothe the pain of her brother's loss. Then He made the Resurrection of personal value to her by identifying it with Himself, from Whom His Own receive that life principle which cannot be holden of death. And He assured her that a soul, like that of St. Lazarus, which had believed into Him, should never die (*vv.* 21-26).

But it is her old, assimilated, well-tested beliefs which are her great strength in her sorrow. "She saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; I *have* believed that Thou art the Christ," foretold in the Prophets, "the Son of God" Who can restore the lost fellowship of man with His Creator, "even He that cometh into the world," that is, the One Who is the Bridge between earth and Heaven (*v.* 27, *R. V.*). Let us then learn the truth of our religion by personal experience, before we subject it to the stress of dire need in affliction.



### **Friday After the First Sunday in Lent**

#### **Affliction Intended to Increase Faith**

Our Lord had for His ultimate purpose, in the raising of St. Lazarus, the development of saving faith. For even the Apostles, who believed "into Him," must advance or deteriorate. Faith "*becomes* and *is* not. He who *is* a Christian is no Christian." Therefore Christ wrought His miracle to the intent that they might believe (*v.* 15). The saintly sisters also grew apace in their faith in Him. Before St. Martha left Him, to call St. Mary, "she had risen above private grief," because she had responded to His new revelation (*vv.* 25-28). But, besides His purpose to reveal

Himself more fully to these dear friends of His, He had determined to make yet another effort to convert the hostile Jews, many of whom were present. For this reason, He offered His thanksgiving for the miracle *before it was wrought*, 'that the Jews might believe that the Father had sent Him' (vv. 41 f.). Surely, then, our Lord wishes us always to meet suffering with a fresh and more perfect act of faith.

Again, those who come to help us, or comfort us, in our trouble, must find our Saviour also with us. It was the Jews who were sympathizing with St. Mary and followed her to her meeting with Jesus, who saw His great "sign" and 'believed into Him.' This was the rich reward of even their natural compassion. We must not send our friends away without the like precious boon of increased faith.

For if we examine the passages in which our Lord said, "thy faith hath saved thee," we find "that the word 'save' reaches through the whole of man's nature to every part of it." Faith, under affliction, therefore, will often gain for us even physical relief (St. Matt. ix: 22; St. Mark x: 52); it will surely make our suffering a penance for our sins and so bring moral healing (St. Luke vii: 50); and it will infallibly crown our recovery with a great spiritual gain (St. Luke xvii: 19).



### **Saturday After the First Sunday in Lent**

#### ***The Passion Throughout Jesus' Life***

Because He was God and His Human Mind was from Childhood illuminated with knowledge, reflected from His Divine Omniscience, Jesus, all His Life, foresaw His Cross. Thus, when the Apostles would

have persuaded Him not to visit Bethany for the raising of St. Lazarus, for fear the Jews would stone Him, He answered in a way that proves His perfect familiarity with every horrid detail of His Passion (*vv.* 7-10). Before Him, He said, lay the full twelve hours of His day, that is, the interval before His appointed time to die. As the "sun knoweth his going down," and no man can hasten his setting, so the Son of Righteousness must run His course. Then would come the night of His Passion, when the black darkness would gather about His Head and He would "stumble" over the gibbet of a convict-slave. In that hour, even the "light" within Him, the ineffable consolation of His vision of the Father, would be quenched, and midnight would reign in that desolate Heart. All this, let us remember, He had known, with every circumstance of His last Agony in Body, Mind and Spirit, from His earliest Boyhood.

This suffering of Christ through anticipation was absolutely unparalleled. Men dread a future disaster, in proportion to the vividness with which their imagination brings it before them, and to the degree in which they fear that they will be subject to it. Now our Lord had a perfect imagination, like, but transcending, that of the greatest artists, which pictured to Him all the horrors of His Passion, with relentless realism; besides, He knew that He would become utterly helpless in the hands of His deadly foes. Thus, tortured by both the mental terrors which make physical cowards, and that to a degree which is impossible for our dimmed faculties, He passed through a very Hell of suffering for thirty years before He was crucified.

"Now is my Soul troubled," He once said, referring to that part of His Spirit in which was "gathered up the fulness of present human life" (xii: 27). Yet the keen agony *manifested* at that moment did not begin then; for literally His words mean, "My Soul *has been and still is* troubled." That pain had been familiar to Him from the beginning. How can we, then, in our affliction, doubt God's love for us, when we consider the Passion of Jesus' whole life, and remember that He was the Only-Begotten, Whom the Father loved infinitely?



**The Second Week in Lent.**

Read St. John xxiii: 53

### **The Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **The Infectious Courage of Jesus**

At the outset of his record of the first Holy Week, St. John sets before us the absolute fearlessness of Christ and the way it was communicated to those around Him. "Jesus therefore," he relates, "six days before the Passover, came to Bethany," on His way to Jerusalem. His significant "therefore" refers to our Lord's knowledge of the high priests' deadly malice against Him (xi: 47-57). He was proscribed, with a price set upon His Head, and a strict commandment of the Pharisees laid upon all the Jews to spy out His place of retirement and inform against Him. Whichever way He turned, He set the serpents hissing. Yet with full consciousness of all these preparations to apprehend and slay Him, He was calmly walking into the very arms of His foes.

The people of Bethany 'therefore made Him a supper there,' St. John continues. This second "therefore" means that the villagers acted so bravely, in

view of Jesus' inspiring courage. Although they must have known that He was an outlaw, condemned by their spiritual rulers, they were emboldened by His fearlessness to show Him their gratitude for the ineffable blessings He had brought them. The family which He had especially loved was of course invited, but the very mention of the facts that St. Lazarus was a guest and that St. Martha served, indicates that the feast was given by the townspeople.

"Mary, therefore, took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very precious, and anointed the feet of Jesus." She also had caught the blessed infection from His brave Heart. She apprehended that she was anointing Him for some Divine act of Self-sacrifice which she intuitively perceived was imminent. With a real share of His own heroism, she had nerved herself to give Him up. May He make us, His "little ones," brave to share His Self-immolation!



### **Monday After the Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **The Penitent**

St. Mary Magdalen was dead when this Gospel was written. St. John feels, therefore, that he may identify her by name as "the woman" who anointed our Saviour for His Burial and received from Him such extraordinary praise (cp. St. Matt. xxvi: 6-13; St. Mark xiv: 3-9). But also, for our comfort, he discloses the fact that she was "the sinner" who had, on a previous occasion, bathed our Lord's Feet with her spikenard and her tears (xi: 2; St. Luke vii: 36-50). Let us then observe how consuming was the love of this great penitent. God had poured out His costliest

gifts on her head; she would at least pour out her most precious ointment upon His Head (St. Matt. xxvi: 7). Not content with this, which was a courtesy sometimes offered to an honored guest, she then knelt down before Him, and anointed His Feet in token of extraordinary reverence. At the same time, she unloosened her hair and with it wiped His Feet, which, especially among Orientals, was "an act of the most complete self-devotion." Finally, she broke the alabaster cruse, so that it never afterwards should be put to any less sacred use (St. Mark xiv: 3).

She was unconscious that in this way she was providing for the last honors of the Most Holy Dead. Judas in his avarice was equally unconscious that he was being led on to accomplish Jesus' Death. Let us learn from their opposite examples, that we must develop a positive habit of self-denial and of prodigal love for Christ, so that we will consecrate that substratum of our characteristic thoughts and volitions which is one main basis of our more conscious, deliberate activity and greatly influences it.

Our Saviour put the highest interpretation upon the act of the dear penitent. He said that it was worthy to be recorded in the Gospel together with His Passion. Because her uncalculating love was like His, the breaking of the alabaster box should be proclaimed to all the Christian world side by side with the rending of His Body; and the pouring out of the precious ointment should be associated forever with the effusion of His Precious Blood. What other friend would appreciate the greatest gift as Jesus does the least thing we do for love of Him?

**Tuesday After the Second Sunday in Lent****Jesus and the Poor**

Our Lord appears to have expected that there would always be poor people, as long as the world lasts, and he enjoins upon us to regard them as our brethren, saying that we are to 'have them *with us*.' St. Chrysostom, indeed, understands Him to have meant that His dear Feet represent to us the poor, and that He would have us pour out upon them the myrrh of Christian kindness. Perhaps we may learn the truth and beauty of this thought from a very tiny, humble teacher. It was a wren who built her nest in the metal foot-rest of the crucifix which stands in the center of the monastic garden at Holy Cross. There she reared her brood in all safety, being assured of special protection and kindness, at the Feet of Jesus.

Our obligation of generosity to Christ's "least brethren" is reinforced by that which we owe to our own souls. For almsgiving is one of the "three notable duties" of a Christian. We can see from the example of Judas how necessary it is for us to perform it faithfully. Our Lord intended that his natural disposition to selfishness should be corrected by the almsgiving of the little Band, which was entrusted to him (cp. xiii: 29).

But our Saviour seeks to impress upon us that the Blessed Eucharist, in which He comes to us, has a greater claim upon us than the poor. "Me ye have not always," He said. In the early morning of each day, He sits upon His humble altar throne in robes of human food. We must pour out our devotion upon Him there, nor scruple to spend upon that Holy Service even "three hundred pence," the wages of a man for a

year. Then we can go forth with sympathy and love drawn from Him, to minister to His poor.



### **Wednesday After the Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **Jesus the King of Israel**

To the Last of the Apostles, our Lord's approach to His Capital on the first Palm Sunday was an episode related rather to the Christians of his day than to the Jews who had crucified his Master. The very poverty of this King whose war horse was the borrowed ass's colt—He had humbly promised to return it "straightway" (St. Mark xi: 3, R. V.)—and Whose retinue was the despised multitude, made Him especially suitable to be the Sovereign Lord of the lowly Apostolic Church (cp. 1 Cor. i: 26). The ass, moreover, was an "unclean" animal, according to the Jewish ceremonial law, and this unbroken colt would therefore well represent the Gentiles, who were to yield their undisciplined hearts so willingly to the mastery of Jesus.

It was remarkable, also, that the people in greeting Christ cried out, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." For this verse from Psalm cxviii had for centuries been chanted by the priests in welcoming the worshippers to the temple. But now the laypeople became priests according to the ancient prophecy, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests," which was fulfilled in the Catholic Church (Ex. xix: 6; Rev. v: 10; 1 St. Pet. ii: 5).

But we feel certain that St. John, writing a quarter of a century after the destruction of Jerusalem, is thinking of the spiritual Zion, when we observe that he prefaces the prophecy of Zechariah with two words

of encouragement to his own "little children." "*Fear not*," he cries to them, as they stand facing the vast relentless cruelty of the Empire, "fear not, Daughter of Zion! Behold, thy King cometh!" Down the ages of Christian history that lowly Monarch rides, for He is the universal Saviour of every generation and every land. May God speed the day when our King shall come to His own in America!



### **Thursday After the Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **True Self-Love**

It was one of the strangest of the paradoxes upon which our Lord insisted, as all four Evangelists bear witness, that true self-love inevitably issues in self-immolation; that the way to keep our life forever is to sacrifice it, and that we attain to fruitfulness through "losing our life," and to glory through mortification. He pointed to three obvious proofs of the proposition expressed by these extraordinary statements (*vv.* 23-25): (1) It is a fundamental law of nature that life springs out of death. Thus, a grain of wheat "abideth" alone, unless, being sown in the darkness of the earth, it perishes, and in perishing nourishes the new plant which it sends forth from its heart to bear an hundredfold. (2) The little group of disciples around Christ who had "hated their lives" for His sake, were evidently "keeping" them in the fullest sense. There must have been a look of calm, deep happiness in their faces, as well as of a quiet dignity, betokening those in the favor of a great King. We notice that the Greek strangers addressed St. Philip, the poor Galilean fisherman, by the title, "Sir,"

or, literally, "Lord." (3) Christ's own crucified Life had been gloriously successful, even in the eyes of the Jews; for, besides His unparalleled supernatural powers, which had culminated in the raising of St. Lazarus from death, 'the world had gone after Him' when He had at last consented to be acclaimed King of Israel (*v.* 19). Thus, He proved by patent evidence, satisfactory even to natural reason, that the way to make the most of ourselves is through dying to ourselves for His sake.

The same truth appears, moreover, in this way: we cannot find real happiness except in the service of Jesus. But if we serve Him, we must follow Him (*v.* 26), and He enjoins upon all His disciples a love like His, consuming self (*xiii:* 34).

Nor is this supernatural self-love impossible for us. For we have three Divine Helpers all striving to lift us up above false self-love even to the height of Jesus Crucified. For the Father is "drawing" us to Christ (*vi:* 44). The Son said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself" (*v.* 32). By the Holy Spirit we are "borne unto Perfection" (*Heb.* *vi:* 1, literally translated). We need only permit the Blessed Trinity to have Their way with us, therefore, and we shall be exalted, poor, faulty servants though we be, to the fellowship of love, with Jesus.



### **Friday After the Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **Christ Suffering for the Gentiles**

It seems surprising, at first, that the approach of the Greeks and their eagerness to see our Lord should have caused Him such keen suffering (*vv.* 20-28).

The reason was, however, that their inquiry brought vividly before Him the need and the receptivity of the Gentiles, to whom the Gospel and the Kingdom of God would soon pass. But first He must die, and rise again, for them. Thus the very appeal of these Greek proselytes erected His Cross before His very Eyes.

Our heroic Master seldom gave any sign of the suffering He constantly bore on our behalf. His words on this occasion are therefore a precious revelation of His dear human Heart. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit," He said, signifying His own Crucifixion under this humble figure. What to the Farmer is the sowing is to the Grain a '*falling* into the earth.' And the poor Seed must leave Its natural sphere and lie in the darkness under the soil. Thus all the suffering, dereliction and manifold mortification of His Death and Sepulture were none the less real to His human Mind, because He, no less than His Father, was determined to pay the supreme price for us Gentiles.

It was in order to show us how bitter was the struggle it cost Him to continue steadfastly in the way of His vocation, and how great was His Love in the Passion He endured on our behalf, that He expressed His thoughts aloud. The alternative of saying, "Father save Me from this hour," which would have once and for all done away with the Cross, or of asking, and obtaining, that His "Father would glorify His name" of Love by the Atonement, had been presented to Him hour by hour all His life. Nor did He ever for one moment hesitate as to His answer. His Life was one long Passion of Love for us, consum-

mated on the Cross. Thus He teaches us that, in the grammar of Divine Charity, the perfect of "live" is love.



### **Saturday After the Second Sunday in Lent**

#### **Believing Into the Light**

It is characteristic of St. John that he remembered our Lord's last words to the Jewish world, as being "an exhortation and a promise," rather than warnings of coming judgment, such as are quoted by the other three Evangelists as the conclusion of their record of His public Ministry (cp. St. Matt. xxv: 46; St. Mk. xiii: 37; St. Luke xxi: 36). The question drawn from the people by His gracious saying that He would be "lifted up from the earth," in order to draw them to Him, had shown that they were entirely unprepared to accept the crucified Son of Man as the Christ (v. 34). Consequently, He foresaw that unless they could be got to 'believe into the Light, while they had the Light,' they would be overtaken by the black night of His Passion, and would never "become sons of Light" (v. 36, A. V. Marg.). In His anxiety to elicit from them a definite, conclusive act of faith in Him, while He was still in their view invested with the splendor of His Kingship (v. 13), He entirely forgot His own position on the very brink of His Passion.

Moreover, our Lord had revealed, in a previous discourse appended by St. John here (vv. 42-50), that it was from His Father He had received His great yearning to illuminate men with Divine Wisdom. "I have not spoken of Myself," He declared, "but the Father which sent Me. He gave Me a commandment

what I should say," that is, the substance of the Gospel, "and what I should speak," which means every word of His teaching in detail (*v.* 49). But, if God was taking such infinite pains to enlighten the Jews, how can it be said that He was at the same time blinding them (*vv.* 39 ff.)? St. Chrysostom long ago answered that the Gospel blinded the Jews, because their spiritual eyes were weak from their own pride and self-will. So far from causing any soul to shut out its salvation, our Lord even refused to condemn the man, if there were any such, who *heard* His teaching, and still remained in sincere unbelief. It was the one who rejected *Him*, and *received not* His words, He said, who would be judged by the Gospel he had wilfully despised (*vv.* 47 f.).

The fact that what we have made ourselves determines whether or not we will hear Christ's word is admirably illustrated by the different interpretations put by two groups of the people upon the Divine Voice which came to our Lord from Heaven (*vv.* 28 f.) To some it was but the muttering of a thunder storm, while to the others it was "the broken syllables of God," brought by an angel,—a message articulate, personal and from some holy speaker. The Voice had come for the sake of the people, but only those whose characters were attuned to God's could hear it. Let us then resolve that our spiritual senses shall be quickened by our repentance and love, this Lent, that through all our future life they may be keen to apprehend the glorious truth of the Divine Illuminator.

**Third Week in Lent.**

Read St. John xiii

**The Third Sunday in Lent****Jesus the Slave of His Creatures**

On the last night of His Ministry, our Lord filled every moment up to His very arrest in Gethsemane with final instructions to His Apostles. The all-important lesson of His unremitting service to His creatures, however, He taught by the symbolic act of washing their feet. Having laid aside His outer garment, and girded Himself with a towel like a domestic slave, He knelt before each of them and performed the most menial of duties. Now, St. John explains that there were three reasons for His thus demanding the right of serving man as His slave: (a) He loved His own, whom He would leave in the world, to the uttermost; (b) He fully realized His Deity, knowing "that He was come from God and went to God"; (c) He was the absolute Sovereign of the universe, for "the Father had given all things into His Hands" (*vv.* 1-5). And, because His action was typical of what He is doing for us every instant, through the ages, every detail of His perfect service is carefully recorded for us (*vv.* 4 f.).

The supreme pledge, however, that the God-Man is bound to work as our slave is the Incarnation. "What wonder," cries St. Austin, "if He girded Himself with a towel, when He had accepted the form of a slave and was found in the habit of man."

How different from Jesus' lowliness and love is the pride of our fallen human nature! Even the Apostles, though they were saints, had scorned to do the office of a slave. Should Peter be servant to John, and so

yield the precedence to him! Should John bathe the feet of that Iscariot, whom he had heard muttering over St. Mary's act of devotion to His Master! Yet God Incarnate knelt humbly before all of them, as indeed He kneels before you and me whenever He washes us clean from the soil of our pilgrimage. Dear Slave! Bind us as Thy fellows, by an irrevocable indenture, for all eternity (*v.* 16).



### **Monday After the Third Sunday in Lent**

#### **The Theological Virtues**

There are three Greek words, in the New Testament, which signify the example of Christ. The first, which is peculiar to St. Paul, the apostolic exponent of Faith, means primarily, "image." The great Apostle represents the whole process of our salvation, as our being 'conformed to the image of the Son of God,' that is, to His Character manifested to us in His example (Rom. viii: 29). Faith would have us keep before our eyes the revelation of perfect holiness in Jesus Christ, and strive to be changed into that Divinely lovely image "from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii: 18, A. V. Marg.).

But Hope, in the person of St. Peter, sets our Lord's example before us as an "alphabetic writing copy," which we are to keep on imitating until it becomes second nature to us. 'For hereunto were ye called,' he tells us, 'because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you a Copy, that ye should diligently follow His steps' (1 St. Pet. ii: 21). He fully recognizes that we are only beginners, awkward children with a perfect Model before us. He himself bungled sadly in trying

to follow It, when he strove to prevent his Saviour from cleansing away his stains, and again when he insisted that he was strong enough to go with Him to prison and death (St. John xiii: 6 ff., 37 f.). But he sets before us the sure hope that, if we only continue practising faithfully, we shall find at last that our character is formed like that of Jesus.

The Apostle of Love presents to us the example of Christ as the Divine Character *in action* (vv. 12-17). We behold the Hands into which the Father had given all things used to bathe the soiled feet of sinners. Those who would follow Christ, he teaches, must be *practical lovers of their race*. The most royal, the most Divine, thing is to be servant of all.



### Tuesday After the Third Sunday in Lent

#### Jesus and Judas

There is an old tradition, that the first of the Apostles whose feet our Lord washed was Judas. Yet, even as He performed the servile task for him, He knew that the foot He was bathing and drying was about to spurn Him over the precipice into the abyss of His Passion. For, a little later, He quoted, with reference to the traitor, the prophetic words: "He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me" (v. 18). But, even now, on the very eve of His betrayal, He was striving with intense longing to win the fallen Apostle.

We see how perfectly thoughtful, and tactful, He was with that evil soul, from the fact that, when He had to identify him for St. John, He whispered, so that only the two inquirers heard. Nor would He,

even thus softly, breathe the traitor's name, for fear of at once revealing him to all the Eleven, to his public shame, and so precipitating his final downfall. Furthermore, He took advantage of the custom of giving a morsel to the favored guest at a banquet, like the later courtesy of drinking the health of the guest of honor, and bestowed this mark of love upon Judas. It seems that he was almost won by this gift of the "sop," for Satan, the very king of evil, hastened to enter his heart, fearing that his job would be spoiled (v. 27). Jesus knew that it was hopeless, then, to save him from spiritual disaster. But when self-will in Judas had, unresisted, fully attained its purpose, there would come a moment of revulsion of feeling, when it would hang suspended, between repentance, which is sorrow for hurting Christ, and remorse, which is pity for self suffering from a guilty conscience. Our Lord planned to extend that moment. Therefore, He urged Judas, 'What thou doest, do *more* quickly,' hoping that he might thus obtain a greater opportunity to choose repentance, and salvation.

Yet the Heart, which practiced this heroic charity, was very human. Thus, He felt sorely oppressed by the traitor's presence. "Now is My Soul troubled," He said, sadly. And, when Judas had gone out, His words show a deep feeling of intense relief (v. 31). He was our own Human Brother, as well as our all-loving God, in His treatment of His incredibly false friend, and we must strive to follow Him, even though it be "afar off."

**Wednesday After the Third Sunday in Lent****The Holiness of the Church**

Jesus, the "Shepherd and Bishop" of the Christian Church, on that last evening before He suffered, gave to His Apostles a share of His everlasting Priesthood, to be the endowment of the Catholic Ministry. Probably the foot-washing was meant in part as a ceremony of ordination, like that by which Moses consecrated Aaron and his sons (Ex. xxix:4). For He commissioned them to wash away the dust of the earthly pilgrimage from the feet of their fellow-servants by Absolution (v. 14; xx:22 f.); and after He had celebrated the first Eucharist, He gave them authority to do as He had done (St. Luke xxii:19; 1 Cor. xi:24 f.).

The generous love of our Head in making these magnificent gifts to the faithful is seen to be all the greater, from the fact that He does not allow them to depend upon the holiness of the one who administers them. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," He declared in His doubly solemn way, "He that receiveth *whomsoever I send*, receiveth Me" (v. 20). Once before He had given them this ambassadorial authority, but with the significant difference that then He had said simply, "Whosoever receiveth you receiveth Me" (St. Matt. x:40). In the meantime, Judas had represented Him, and He wanted them to know that even the traitor's ministerial acts were valid. Thus, He will not permit the people to be deprived of the means of grace by the unworthiness of the priest.

Moreover, in His eyes, a Church does not cease to be holy, even though it contains false disciples. To teach this, He said to the Church in the Upper Room,

"Ye are clean, but not all." They did not *as a body* lose the note of holiness, even though one of them was a traitor to their Lord. Thus, Jesus Christ wishes us to continue faithful communicants of His Church, though laymen, or even the very priests at the altar, prove disloyal to Him.



### **Thursday After the Third Sunday in Lent**

#### **Troubling and Comforting Jesus**

There were three occasions, which St. John links together by the strong Greek verb he uses only therein, when our Lord was "troubled." The first time was at the grave of St. Lazarus, when He voluntarily assumed the suffering of the sisters (xi: 33, R. V. Marg.). The second was when the appearance of the Greek Gentiles made Him realize more poignantly than before the bitterness of His approaching Passion (xii: 27). This was natural, human pain which came uninvited but was borne gladly for our sake. It was the third affliction which our Saviour endured unwillingly, because it was due to the disloyalty of His friend. All our infirmities and sicknesses, our grief, and the death-penalty of our transgression, He accepted joyfully, but He shrinks with loathing and horror from the infliction of our sins.

It is a happiness to know, that at the moment He felt the treason of Judas most keenly, the Disciple whom He loved lay in His Bosom. Let us picture the group. As was the custom, the company reclined, three together, on the divans. St. Peter was just beyond our Lord, Who lay between him and St. John, so that the young Apostle's head was close to his Master's Breast. When he asked the name of the traitor,

he leaned back so that he rested upon our Saviour's Heart and looked up into His Face. The place of honor, second to that of Jesus in the center, was assigned to St. Peter as the eldest of the Apostolic College; but St. John's was the station of His beloved one, whose great devotion soothed His wounded Spirit. We also have it in our power to apply that salve of holiness and love. Shall we withhold it from Jesus?

However great was His own suffering, Christ spared the Eleven to the utmost of His power. Charity to Judas would have forbidden Him even to indicate who the traitor was, so that it would become known after his departure, had it not been that He could not bear to see His faithful Apostles suffer from the fear that one of them would turn against Him. It is grateful to Jesus, if we imitate His charity. Let us to-day resolve to practice it, especially against detraction and over-severity toward others.



### **Friday After the Third Sunday in Lent**

#### ***Glorifying the Father***

When Judas had left for his black deed, our Lord cried out with triumphant exultation, "Now was the Son of Man glorified, and God was glorified in Him" (*v.* 31, *R. V. Marg.*). His meaning was that in permitting Judas to depart on his mission of betrayal, He had made a definite act of Self-surrender to His Vocation of suffering death for the salvation of the world. He could have ordered the arrest of the traitor, but instead He had, at that crucial moment, as always, chosen to accept His Passion. Thus His Father was glorified in His Soul by His act of sacrifice of His

Human Will. Now, the disciple must imitate His Lord in this self-immolation to the glory of God (xxi: 19).

But not only was the Father glorified in the Lamb of God by His freely submitting to become our Victim; His own Human Spirit was glorified in God. "Now," He declared, "was the Son of Man glorified." The same Crucifixion of His Human Will by which He magnified His Father, merited, and instantly obtained, an added beauty for His radiant Soul. And we, whenever we exalt God by a thought, or some little act of self-denial for His sake, immediately receive an increase of grace and favor in His sight.

Furthermore, our Lord revealed that the Father would glorify His Manhood the more for every suffering of His Passion. "God shall glorify [the Son of Man] in Himself," He said, "and *straightway* shall He glorify Him." The Bloody Sweat of Gethsemane, the seven false trials, the crowning of thorns, the scourging, and the final hours on Calvary, replete as they were with agony, brought not one slightest throb of pain which was without its meed of everlasting splendor to the Soul of the Crucified. Yet, there is a far more wonderful proof of the Father's love than this. For He rewards His poor sinful creatures with glory, for their every suffering in His service, just as surely as He added to the ineffable beauty of His Incarnate Son, for the Acts of His Passion.



### **Saturday After the Third Sunday in Lent**

#### **The New Commandment**

It is very significant that Jesus never referred to His commandments until the eve of His Passion. He

meant to lay upon His disciples as His special precept, the obligation of a love like His own, and He reserved this supremely important matter, until it would come to them from His death-bed with double sacredness. Besides, it would be wisest to leave them something hard to do during the years of loneliness that would follow His Ascension (*v.* 33); and to strive after the ideal of Divine Charity, for His sake, would comfort, at the same time that it would humble, them.

The law of love for our fellow-men is not new in substance (cp. Lev. xix: 18; St. Luke x: 27). But when our Saviour commanded His disciples to love one another even as He had loved them, He assigned a new and far more compelling *motive* for that mutual charity which had long been of obligation. Now they must exercise it for His sake, Whose love for them on the Tree was "strong as death." Again, their spiritual love was wider in *scope*; it would be the super-eminent virtue of His Universal Church and by it all men would be attracted to the standard of the Cross (*v.* 35). Lastly they had just received a *power* for holy charity which had never existed before. For the great High Priest had for the first time given them the Blessed Sacrament of Love.

We appreciate somewhat of the impression He made upon the Apostles by His "new commandment," from the ancient tradition that at the very time St. John wrote his Gospel, his one sermon, Sunday after Sunday, was, "Little children, love one another." St. Jerome relates that his people became weary of his repeating this so often, and asked him why he did so. "Because," he answered, "it is the Lord's commandment; and, if it is fulfilled it is enough." May Jesus fill our hearts with this deep apostolic charity, dissipat-

ing all malice and unkindness, and binding us together in Himself.



**The Fourth Week in Lent.**

Read St. John xiv

### **The Fourth Sunday in Lent**

#### **God's Many Mansions**

The warning that St. Peter would soon deny their beloved Master, not once nor twice, but thrice, had filled the Eleven with sadness, both for our Lord's sake and for that of their fellow Apostle. Jesus saw, therefore, that for the time their greatest need was not so much charity as faith. Therefore, He said to them, 'Let not your heart be troubled; believe into God, believe also into Me' (v. 1, A. V. Marg.). He knew that the future looked gloomy indeed to them. For one thing, it seemed that they would be homeless wanderers in the world. He must make them realize that, though they might be without earthly friends, or wealth, or even shelter, they would still be safe, body and soul, in God and in His own devoted Heart.

Yet, Heaven, whither they knew He was going, seemed a vast distance from the earth. It was not so, He assured them. "In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you." The "mansions" were, literally, the inns which were located along the great postroads of the Empire, and His Father's "House" was the universe. Thus He meant to teach them that the world, for all their labor and strife, would be to them but a rest-house, a place of calm peace and refreshment, on the way Homeward. There was no immense abyss between the earth and Heaven, but rather a postroad, which He was about to point out to them (v. 4).

But even these great consolations were not enough to comfort them. He knew well that what they could not bear was the fear that He would no longer be with them as Man. He hastened, therefore, to take away this baseless dread. "If I go and prepare a place for you," He said, "I come again," and "the 'coming' is regarded in its continual present." Jesus 'would not leave them orphans'; He would be perpetually 'coming' in the Blessed Sacrament. Indeed, He would abide always with them, if they would reserve the Holy Mysteries (*v.* 18, *R. V.*; *St. Matt.* xxviii: 20). Now, all their blessings are ours. And ours, too, is that most precious promise, "I will receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also." For it means that a Christian's death is just dear Jesus coming and taking his soul in His arms to carry it into another "mission" of His Father's House.



### **Monday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent**

#### **Jesus Is the Way**

Our dear Lord declared that He is All. He is the Way to God, the Truth to guide us on our pilgrimage, and Life to quicken and maintain us unto the end (*v.* 6). And, when time shall be no more, He will be to us also the Resurrection and the Life Everlasting (*xi:* 25).

Our race has always needed Him to supply its deepest want. The oldest religion of which we have any remains is Taoism, a cry for "the Way" from those lost Mongolian brethren of ours, ringing out to God in the early dawn of human history. For the term "Tao," modern scholars agree, means a quest of the

way or passage through which everything enters into life, and at the same time the way of highest perfection. Man's search ended when Christ came and established His Holy Church, which as if to reveal "Tao," took during its earliest years no title but "The Way" (cp. Acts ix: 2; xix: 9, 23, etc., A. V. Marg.).

Jesus is, therefore, the Viaduct between the two worlds of earth and Heaven. For 'no one cometh unto the Father, but through Him.' It is this "Way" upon which He would have us concentrate our attention and effort, while yet we keep the Divine Goal in view. "Whither I go," He told His stricken Apostles, "ye know the way" (*vv.* 4 ff., R. V.). There is a modern painting, of three men racing, which admirably illustrates this teaching of the Christian course. There is a boy running freely and joyfully, evidently delighted with the exercise, not looking to the end particularly, but keeping to the course. Beside him is a mature man, whose eyes are fixed upon the goal, toward which he is directing his every step. The third of the group is an old man, who runs with eyes bent on the ground, following the course marked out. The child represents the joy of the faithful even in mid-course; the younger of the two adults symbolizes the Christian as he runs "looking away to Jesus"; and the elder personifies the prudent care we must exercise to follow the "Way" which our Saviour has marked out by His Footsteps.



## **Tuesday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent**

### **The Sacredness of Truth**

Jesus Christ is "the Truth." All knowledge, both secular and religious, is from His Divine Mind. He is the Light Which is ever 'coming into the world,' more

and more, as each succeeding generation becomes the heir of all the past, and grows increasingly receptive to Him. Thus, every kind of truth, whether of art or science or theology, is a ray from the True Light (i:9). Be it a landscape or a newly discovered principle of physics or biology, Parsifal, or two plus two equals four, all are the Thoughts of God. In them the painter or the scientist, the great musician or the schoolboy, has but reflected gleams of the infinite Wisdom in the Word of God.

It follows that the Catholic Christian is best fitted to receive all knowledge. For, by our religion our minds are brought into ever closer likeness to the Mind of God, and thus we gain a greater receptiveness for His Wisdom. Again, our consciences are simply our minds acting upon a particular kind of truth, that is, the moral law in its various applications to conduct. If, therefore, our consciences are cleansed and strengthened by righteousness, our minds will be correspondingly purified and stimulated so that they can better discern, not only the truth of morals, but that of science, metaphysics and theology. It will help us to see how true in experience this principle is, if we take one out of a vast number of examples. The scientific fact upon which all antitoxins are based was discovered by a man of mediocre ability, but of deep piety and consecration. All the famous chemists of the Academy of Science had examined the two globules from which the blessed truth was first learned; but only poor, dull Pasteur, the butt of scientific Paris, observed intelligently the phenomenon that one molecule was a trifle flatter than the other. His mind had become receptive to the new truth, which he deduced, because through prayer and sacraments it had grown

to be more like that of the Word, than was the most brilliant intellect among the savants of the Academy. It is, therefore, to a man who strove for truth as Divine and Sacred, one who approached science with a mind full of religious dogmas, and whose chief endowment was holiness, that we owe the countless lives saved by the use of antitoxins.

Jesus is Truth. Skepticism, in the person of the Sadducees and Pilate, crucified Him. Shall we, then, encourage the enemies of the Word of God? Shall we read, and disseminate their books, or even listen to their teaching? St. John fled from the building which was sheltering the heretic Cerinthus. Let us have no part nor lot with false teachers, but rather guard Divine Truth as we guard the safety of our Lord.



### **Wednesday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent**

#### **Jesus Is Our Life**

Our dear Lord twice revealed Himself as "the Life," and on both occasions the light of His saying is the more glorious because there was the gloomy background of death (cp. xi: 25). In the Upper Room, that last night, He wanted the Apostles to know that through His Self-immolation, He would become to His Church the Source of boundless vital power in "the way." At the grave of Lazarus, He meant that His faithful servants receive from Him a principle of life which will survive death, and at the Resurrection will fill their souls and bodies with eternal health.

St. John, writing sixty years after Christ ascended, could still say to all the communicants throughout the Church that the Humanity of the Incarnate Word was

“full of grace” for them, and that of His fulness *they all had* received, and grace upon grace (i: 14, 16). The entire body of the faithful in 95 A.D. had drawn their souls’ fill from the Fountain of Life in Jesus as truly as the Apostles themselves had done. Yet, except for the Blessed Sacrament, which is the “Extension of the Incarnation,” no Christian of that day could possibly have received grace from the Chalice of that sacred Manhood which was throned in Heaven. But through those same Holy Mysteries, we Twentieth Century Christians, like the countless past generations of the Church’s children, receive spiritual vitality to our utmost capacity, from Jesus’ limitless fulness of life.

It is notable that the unusual Greek word for “fulness” occurs only once in St. John’s writings, and nowhere else in the Bible except in St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to the Ephesians, both of which were written from his Roman prison. The word for “grace,” also, after being used by our Evangelist four times, never again appears in this sense in his writings, but occurs with great frequency in the Pauline Epistles. Very probably, therefore, St. John’s conception of Christ as “full of grace” and sharing his “fulness” with his poor brethren in the world, is a reminiscence of his fellowship with the great prisoner at Rome. He, himself, according to the tradition, was cast into a vat of boiling oil, but his life was miraculously preserved. It is profoundly touching that the two Apostles, through the very stress of the peril and suffering they endured, came to realize the “fulness” of the Son of Man. In trouble like theirs, we also may, if we will, discover the all-sufficiency for our needs of Him Who is our Life.

**Thursday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent****Jesus' Way with His Own**

Nothing could be more deeply appealing than the extreme delicacy and tenderness of Jesus with His Apostles during those last hours before His arrest. It was as if He was keeping His finger on their pulse, and was sensitive to its slightest slackening or quickening. Thus, He noticed instantly that they "heard" when He told them gently that He was going away, and the look of intense relief when He hastened to add "I come again unto you" (vv. 2 f., 28). He would not lay upon them even more instruction than He saw they could "bear" (xvi: 12). Yet He knew that the hour was upon Him when He would go forth into the Place of a Skull "bearing His Cross."

His intense solicitude for them appears also from the fact that once and again He sought to soothe the trouble out of their hearts (vv. 1, 27). His Heart was abundantly "troubled," both by Judas' treason, and by the anticipation of His Agony and Death. But He completely forgot His own anguish in consoling them.

No way of Comforting His Own did He leave untried. As tenderly and ingeniously as some wonderful mother He suggested one helpful thought after another: He was only going away to prepare a place for them, where they could be with Him always: (vv. 2 f.). They should have *another* Advocate, abiding with them on earth; He, also, would come continually to His "orphans" in the Blessed Sacrament (vv. 16-18). He was leaving them the precious bequest of His peace and His joy (v. 27; xv: 11). Besides, they ought to rejoice over *His* gain in His going "unto the Father," because the Father was greater than He in

His Manhood, and would clothe that sacred Humanity with ineffable glory and fill the dear Heart with joy eternal (v. 28). But they also, almost immediately after His Passion, would have a Risen Saviour, over Whom they would rejoice as a mother over her first-born babe (xvi: 16-20). And they would make an infinite profit even out of His Ascension to Heaven, because He *must* depart thither, before He could send the Blessed Spirit upon His Church (xvi: 7). This is Jesus' Way with His own. May we not commit ourselves, body and soul, into His pierced Hands with absolute trust?



### Friday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent

#### Our Way with Jesus

The disciples of Him Who was Divine Love Incarnate must be, above all things, *practical*. "If you love Me," so runs His test of our Christianity, "ye will keep My commandments" (v. 15, A. V. Marg.). And this is one of those propositions which is so true in all its terms that its converse also is true. "If ye keep My commandments," He declared a little later, "ye shall abide in My love." Thus He urges practical discipleship upon both of the two opposite types of Christians: those who are temperamentally disposed to obedience must learn to be *lovers*, not *legalists*; while those who are easily moved to love of Christ and their fellows must constrain themselves to obey His commandments, laid down in His Gospel and His Church.

Moreover, we must permit our Lord to manifest Himself to us more and more perfectly (v. 21). Let us learn a lesson from the error of St. Thomas and St. Philip. They supposed that God could only reveal

Himself to them in an apparition, or theophany (*v.* 8). "Lord," said St. Philip, "show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But the most perfect manifestation of God was through the revelation of Holiness and Love in the life of His Incarnate Son, recorded for us in the Gospel. "If ye had known Me," Christ answered, "ye would have known My Father also. . . . He that hath seen Me, hath seen the Father." In fact, we receive in the Life of Jesus a far more perfect revelation of God than we could get from many visions of Him.

Thus did He teach His Apostles the way of fellowship with Him. And we should realize that they actually learned His lessons of obedience, love and receptiveness. Thus, St. Thomas remained silent after his first question, and assimilated what he was told, until it bore fruit in his great confession of Jesus as his Lord and God (*xx:28*). Let us provide Him an abode with us (*v.* 23), and put our life under the dominion of His love.

### **Saturday After the Fourth Sunday in Lent**

#### **Jesus' Gift to His Own**

Our Saviour tells us that His way of giving to us is the opposite of that which obtains in the world (*v.* 27). If we compare the two, we find these among other points of contrast: (1) Worldlings give from interested motives, hoping to receive as much again, or more (*St. Luke vi:33 f.*); while Christ gives to those who have nothing wherewith to recompense Him. (2) They share only with their friends; He offers His all freely to friend and foe alike. (3) They part only with what costs them nothing, or, what, like bequests, they cannot keep; Christ's benefits cost Him

a Life of suffering, the Cross, and continual labor up until now, and He could have retained all without in the least diminishing His own happiness. (4) They pretend to bestow the most precious gifts, while in fact they do not possess them; but Jesus endows His beloved ones with His own characteristic peace and joy in their perfection and fulness (*v.* 27; *xv*: 11).

If, however, we think of the world's gifts in our Lord's comparison as being the temporal blessings of our natural life, our experience again justifies His saying, "Not as the world gives, give I unto you." For earthly joys are so constituted as to give the greatest pleasure at the beginning. They serve us with their best wine first, then bring on that which is worse. But Christ's gifts "grow in power and fulness of blessing." He keeps the good wine until the last.

The blessing of peace is an excellent example. The world cries, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (*Jer.* vi: 14). But Jesus bequeathed us *His* peace, to comfort us in trouble and to save us from moral cowardice (*v.* 27); for that legacy from our Saviour is the sure "confidence of faith and fellowship with God." May dear Jesus give us, morning by morning, His Kiss and His Greeting of Peace (*xx*: 19, 26).



[The following Meditations (to page 215) on Chapters xv-xvii are intended for Ascensiontide and Whitsuntide, because they constitute the only appropriate part of the Gospel for those Seasons. It seems better to place our studies on this section here, in order not to break the continuity of the sacred text. The reader should pass them by at this time and continue the Lenten Meditations.]

For Ascensiontide.

Read St. John xv

**Ascension Day****The Heavenly Vine**

The beautiful parable of the Vine and Its branches was very probably spoken by Christ as He stood in the Temple. It is certain, that He had left the Upper Room and was at some point on His way to Gethsemane; we know also that His Father's House was open after midnight on this one day in the year, and accordingly, with great authorities, we shall think of Him as remaining there until He had finished His High Priestly prayer (xvii). How full of sacred associations it was for them all! There, on Mount Moriah, Melchizedek had offered his sacrifice to the "Most High God," and there, also, Abraham had, in intention, offered his son as a willing victim (Gen. xiv: 18 ff.; xxii: 14; cp. 2 Chron. iii: 1).

Before them, crowning the portal of the temple, was fastened a great golden vine heavy with clusters. "I am the true Vine," said our Lord; and later He added, "Ye are the branches." He is not simply the *stem*, but the entire Plant, including in Itself every tiny shoot and new graft. Thus He would teach us, that we of the Church on earth are in vital union with Him in Heaven. Wherever we go, we are still branches of this Heavenly Vine, and must bear fruit unto It (v. 16). Apart from Him, we can do nothing (vv. 4 f.). The vine *wood* is, indeed, entirely worthless; probably from the Temple Mount they could see the fires of Kidron burning the withered clippings from the vineyards. The more fruitful we are, therefore, the more joyfully certain we can be that we are being strength-

ened by grace from Jesus' Soul, as the fruitful branch is nourished by sap from the heart of the vine.

One other lesson, which is set in the forefront of this discourse, is that the Apostles were "clean through the Word" of Christ, that is, through the whole course of His instruction and discipline during their three years together. Probably He was referring to the fact that according to the Mosaic Law a vine was held to be "unclean" for three years during which time much of its natural growth had to be pruned away. If, therefore, we are allowed to suffer, let us consider it a sign that, through our union with Jesus in Heaven, we are fruitful, wherefore the Divine Husbandman is "cleansing us," that we may bring forth more fruit (*v. 2*). Suffering is a positive proof to Christians that God is in His Heaven, and all is well with us on earth.



### **Friday in the Octave of Ascension**

#### **Discontent with Our Fruitfulness**

There is an almost incredible object held out to the ambition of the Christian in our Lord's revelation that our Heavenly Father is glorified in our bearing much fruit. Every fresh cluster adds to the praise, and the joy, of the Divine Husbandman. By the same means of fruitfulness, moreover, we '*become* Christ's disciples' (*v. 8 R. V.*). "Something is always wanting to the completeness of discipleship. A Christian never '*is,*' but always is '*becoming*' a Christian and it is by his fruitfulness that he vindicates his claim to the name." Besides, we must accept the challenge which our Saviour offers us when He says, "Even as the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you; abide ye

in my love" (v. 9 R. V.). If we are living in the light and warmth of Jesus' Charity we cannot but be fruitful.

Let us then be discontented with our productiveness. Our Lord was not satisfied even with His eleven great Saints. He spoke as if they had made small progress even in knowing Him, saying, "*If ye had known Me,*" implying that even after all the revelations of their years with Him, their knowledge of His Personality was still far from complete (xiv: 7). Again, He urged them to aspire after greater devotion to Him, saying, "*If ye loved Me,*"—suggesting that He wanted them to consider the great love they already had for Him as nothing (xiv: 28). But what must He think of our complacent contentment with our slight knowledge of Him, and with that feeble affection which is our best response to His Divine love?

Yet, for all our disappointing dullness, our Lord is invincibly optimistic about us. Immediately after He had clearly seen the failure of the Apostles to discern the Father in Him, He said with perfect confidence, '*From now on ye know Him, and have seen Him.*' Moreover, He recognizes and values to the full even our imperfect response to Him. 'Ye hear My Word,' He said to the eleven; and again He relied upon His Own 'beholding Him' after He had departed from the world's sight (xiv: 24, 19). Finally, His patience with our slowness is inexhaustible. When it seemed that after all the Apostles had not attained to belief in His Oneness with His Father simply on His Word, He was ready to begin over again with them at the first lesson of faith: "Believe *Me,*" He pleaded, "that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; or else believe *Me for the very works' sake*" (xiv: 11). Surely, we

must strive to bear more and sweeter fruit for this King of Divine Charity and Lover of our poor sinful souls.



### Saturday in the Octave of Ascension

#### Prayer and Our Ascended Lord

"If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will and it shall be done unto you." Thus did dear Jesus reveal to us the spirit of prayer. "The petitions of the true disciples are echoes of Christ's words." Whether our prayer be supplication for temporal or spiritual benefits, intercession, thanksgiving or worship, it must always be in harmony with His teaching in the Holy Scriptures. But on this sole condition, we can be absolutely certain that our devotion obtains a full and overflowing response from Infinite Love.

For with our prayers are joined those of our Saviour, Who "ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. vii:25). What loving solicitude fills His continual prayer, we know from that which He offered in the Temple (xvii). But, not content with assuring us that He is forever lifting up those pierced Hands on our behalf, He has revealed to us certain ways in which we can touch His Sacred Heart to plead for us with special tenderness: (1) by loving and obeying Him (xiv:14 f.); (2) by faith in Him as our God and Saviour (xvii:6-9); (3) by especial need of Him (xvii:11-16); (4) by unworldliness (xvii:14-16). One more means there is of making Him intercede most earnestly for us, but this we must never use. It is by falling into mortal sin (1 St. John ii:1).

The *supreme* assistance of our risen Lord is, how-

ever, through the perpetual re-petition of Calvary which He makes upon His altar throne (Rev. v:6). For by His very Presence in Heaven He continually memorializes before the Father what He did for our salvation on the Cross. Our prayers must be effectual with this Divine High Priest to plead them at His Heavenly Altar. Let us then, praying "through Jesus Christ," take the Heart of God by storm, for ourselves and for all who need our intercessions.



### **Sunday in the Octave of Ascension**

#### **Our Christian Joy Fulfilled**

It was only when our Lord reached the very eve of Good Friday that He spoke of 'His joy' (v. 11). He was then looking forward to showing that supreme love of the man who lays down his life for his friends (v. 13); and His gladness in thus loving us to the uttermost was His characteristic joy. Ours He knew would be more natural and more composite than His own unmixed heroic happiness in Self-sacrifice. But He desired that His joy should have a *place* in us in order that ours might be sweetened and sanctified.

Second only to His example in thus preferring the happiness of complete Self-oblation to all others, is that of His holy Forerunner (iii:29). For it was as the Baptist stood on the brink of his passion, with his ministry ending in failure before his eyes, and face to face with imprisonment and death, that he said, "My joy is fulfilled."

It is the aged writer of the Fourth Gospel who alone records these sayings of his first master and of his eternal King. In his long experience, he had

learned his lesson, that natural happiness turns stale and bitter if it be not mingled with some measure of the joy of self-sacrifice. He tells us, moreover, that our Ascended Lord looks upon us as His "friends" (v. 14), and surely there can be no such felicity as that which belongs to the friends of God. But it means that He counts every faithful Christian as an Abraham (St. James ii: 23); and as the Father of the Faithful had, there on the Temple Mount, been willing to offer what He loved best, so must we be. Then our joy shall be fulfilled, though like St. John, we are lonely and old and persecuted, for we shall be the friends of the Crucified in Heaven.



### **Monday in the Octave of Ascension**

#### **Our Hatred and Love of the World**

Twice over, and the second time during the solemn hour in the Temple, Christ told the Eleven that the world hated him, and warned them that they must expect to be the object of its hostility just as He had been (zv. 18 f., cp. vii: 7). The sixfold repetition of "the world" in His statement brings out its multiform antipathy to Him and to His Church. He emphasizes, also, the fact that it hated Him "*without a cause*" (v. 25), by using the same word for this which had expressed "*the gift of God*" to man (iv: 10). He came bringing to the world God's gratuitous love and grace, and it repaid Him with gratuitous hatred and a Cross.

Yet His Heart was full of Divine charity for it, still. It was because he knew this, that St. Jude exclaimed in amazement over His saying that He would manifest Himself unto His Own, and not unto the

world (xiv: 22 ff.). He felt certain that Christ longed to reveal Himself to all mankind. For had not his Master said again and again that He loved the whole world and had come to save it? (iii: 14 ff.; xii: 47.) And was it not a prophecy about the Messiah that He need only ask and His Father would give Him the heathen for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession? (Ps. ii: 8.) Many a night, as he knew, his Lord had spent on His knees praying for the fulfillment of that promise. St. Jude was right in his assurance that there was no lack in His infinite longing for the salvation of every soul which comes into the world (1 St. Tim. ii: 4).

But the world would not receive its Saviour. It was not the Pharisees, or Pilate, who led in dealing out to Him the most shameful of capital punishments; it was the Sadducees, the representatives of the world-spirit, who cajoled and bullied the others into assisting them. How, then, can we love that which has ever hated our Head? How can we adopt its anti-Christian conventions and fashions? We cannot be Jesus' friends, if we do not hate the sin of the world, and seek the salvation of every sinner in it.



### **Tuesday in the Octave of Ascension**

#### **Slaves Not Greater Than Their King**

Both our Lord and His Beloved Disciple have laid great emphasis on that saying of Christ, "The servant is not greater than his Lord." As precious and crowded as the interval was before His arrest, He repeated it solemnly then, although He had said it in the Upper Room (v. 20, cp. xiii: 16). St. John records His

words on both occasions, although St. Matthew and St. Luke had both given them; and he alone uses for "servant" the strong word "slave." He had looked up through a rift in Heaven and had seen the Slave of the Universe seated upon the Throne of God. After that the servile title for a disciple was royal and Divine.

It was in order to commend to us precepts which He knew would be very much against our natural self-love, that our Saviour directed us to imitate His own humility and meekness. First, then, we must welcome the opportunity to perform menial services for our brethren. St. Peter particularly, always bore in mind the lesson which he had learned when God Incarnate had bathed his feet. Long afterward, remembering Jesus girded with a towel, he thus exhorted his clergy: "All of you gird yourselves," or, literally, "be aproned," "with humility, to serve one another." Secondly, we must bear ill treatment with patience. It was a very dear and helpful thought to St. John and his people, expecting the terrible Domitian persecution, that their Lord had, on the brink of His own Passion, shown His perfect meekness in bearing the injuries of His enemies.

The last of the three great lessons which the Divine Servant taught His fellows, was given at the beginning of their discipleship, and was different from these, although related to them (St. Luke vi: 40). For then He had used His familiar exhortation to enforce the truth that *their* disciples would not rise above themselves in the Christian virtues. He would teach us that we must strive to imitate our Master in Heaven, not only for His glory and our own soul's sake, but also

for the welfare of those whom we instruct by word and example. The Christian is to be, himself, a master to his weaker or less fortunate brethren, and by his own lowliness and love "to ring the rising-bell in the dormitory of other souls."



### Wednesday in the Octave of Ascension

#### Our Witness to Christ

There is no glory of our Christian life greater than that which is conferred upon us by our privilege, and duty, of bearing witness to our ascended Lord. This is Divine work, in which He even associates us with the Blessed Trinity; for the Father "hath borne witness of Him," He 'bore record' of Himself, and the Holy Ghost continually "beareth witness" of Him (cp. v: 37; viii: 14; v. 26 f.). For us to confess Him in our personal life and teaching is thus to join in a Divine Chorus. But Jesus associates us in this especially with the Holy Ghost. Our testimony, which is external, is the counterpart of that interior illumination of His whereby He takes of Christ's and shows it unto the Church (xvi: 14).

Accordingly it is impossible to exaggerate the importance to our Lord of *what we are*, because the witness of a genuine Christian life is more convincing to the world than that of the inspired Bible and the infallible Catholic Church.

Yet, our Christian character is only in the making, and we are not to consider it a failure when it seems to compare unfavorably with pagan types around us. It is a much more difficult thing, at first, to possess both courage and meekness, efficiency and humility, and to reconcile them in speech and conduct, than it is

to be simply keen, self-reliant, successful people of the world. Thus Cephas displayed natural courage and loyalty at our Lord's arrest (xviii: 10), but when He was required to unite with these qualities the Christian virtues of obedience and longsuffering, he deserted his Lord ignominiously, and afterwards denied Him thrice. What a contrast to him is Caiaphas, the clear-headed, masterful, successful high priest of the Jews. But the Christian Faith developed Cephas into the Stone-man and the Saint, whose life and teaching have helped the Blessed Spirit mightily in filling the New Jerusalem with citizens; while Caiaphas went down to his grave universally hated by his own people and with the curse of the Talmud upon him. ♪

### **The Octave Day of the Ascension**

#### ***Fellowship with Jesus in Heaven***

The call to fellowship with our Saviour is as real for us to-day as it was for the Apostles and the holy women. For His very presence with us, whether as God, everywhere we go, or as the God-Man, in the Blessed Sacrament, constitutes His invitation to visit with Him. He had only to appear at Bethany, and the holy sisters felt that they were summoned to Him. "The Master has come and calleth for thee," St. Martha said to St. Mary, when in fact He had done this, not in words, but simply by being in their home. Moreover, He has told us that He expects us to "behold Him" even now when He is throned in Heaven. And what He means by this, practically, is admirably interpreted by the Greeks who came to seek Him (xii: 20 ff.). For they had begged that they might "see Jesus." Yet they had been gazing at Him and listen-

ing to His preaching, from a little distance. They rightly considered that really to *see* Him meant to come into His immediate Presence and lay their thoughts before Him. In this same, true, sense, we may behold Him as often as we will.

It is but honestly due to our Lord that we should let Him abide with us. St. John impresses this dear duty upon us in the following way: he records our Lord's comforting assurance that He has gone away into Heaven in order that He may prepare a mansion for us, and then, His gracious, and appealing, promise that He and His Father will come to the soul that loves Him and 'make their mansion' with it (xiv: 2 and 23, literally translated). He has used in these two sayings a word for "mansion," or "rest-house," which appears nowhere else in the Scriptures, to point his meaning, that the dear Carpenter is building for each of us a palace in Heaven and asks in return the hovel of our sinful heart.

Fellowship with Him is for us a little foretaste of Heaven. "Ye," said our Lord to the Apostles, "*are* with Me from the beginning (v. 27). Their life at His Side had been a timeless present. There had been, as it were, no past nor future, but an endless *now*. Their hard life with its labors and anxieties, sufferings and sorrows, had been transfigured by light from Heaven. It was the beginning of their immortality, because they were with Jesus.

9

**For the Five Days Following.**

Read St. John xvi

**Friday After the Octave of Ascension**

**Christ Sending the Paraclete**

The most difficult part of our Lord's labor in consoling His Apostles was His task of persuading them that it was expedient for them that He should depart to His Father (v. 7). But, even that night in the Temple, He seems to have been in a measure successful, by His glowing descriptions of the Paraclete Whom He would send to them from Heaven, for He convinced them that He must ascend to His Father before He could bestow that Divine Gift upon them. Not until the whole process of Redemption had been consummated by His Enthronement, could the Spirit-bearing Church be sent forth for its work of Sanctification. Only after He had been consecrated as the "Bishop of our souls" at the Right Hand of His Father, could He ordain the Apostolic Ministry by the Pentecostal Gift. And before the end of the first Eastertide He must have completely won their hearts to love of His Holy Spirit, for we read that they returned from bidding Him farewell full of joy and thanksgiving (St. Luke xxiv: 52 f.).

When we realize that Christ had taught them to think of the Holy Ghost as "another Comforter" like Himself, we are not surprised that they looked forward with such joy and eagerness to His coming. The title "Paraclete" is peculiar to St. John, and means both a Comforter, or Strengtheners, of their souls, and an Advocate for them and for the success of their ministry, before the throne of God. So prodigally is Divine charity lavished upon us, that we must have two such Paracletes, Christ and His "Other Self."

Our Saviour commended His Holy Spirit to His Church in another way, also: He has left it to us to reverence and honor the blessed Paraclete. For He said that He glorified His Father and that the Holy Spirit glorifies Him, but He seems to expect the Catholic Church to glorify His Spirit. In the same way, He came in the Father's Name, and the Comforter was sent in His; we, Christ's brethren, have the glorious vocation of going forth in the Name of the Holy Spirit.



### **Saturday After the Octave of the Ascension**

#### **The Holy Ghost Converting the World**

Not for the faithful alone did Jesus send His Holy Spirit from His Human Heart in Heaven into the heart of His Mystical Body on earth. The plan of the Blessed Trinity in that Mission of the Advocate was, in part, that He should convince the *world* "of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment," in order that it might be converted (*vv.* 8-11). It seemed hopeless to the Apostles that *they* could win the hard hearts which had rejected the pleading, the signs of Divine Power and Love, and the attraction of the Personality of Incarnate God (*xv.* 22-26). Then our Lord promised them the Holy Ghost, to be their mighty Helper; they should have Two Paracletes, Both infinitely full of yearning love for souls. And the success of this doubling of the boundless measure of Divine assistance was apparent on Pentecost. For the thousands who had shouted "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" now came crying, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved.' They were convicted of sin by the Holy Ghost, 'because they had not believed in the Lord of Glory' (*Acts* ii: 23, 36).

But many people, who are convinced of sin, will not admit the possibility of their becoming righteous. They contend that the best they can do is to lead a moderately good life, free from most of the greater sins. The Holy Ghost is continually convincing these souls, by showing them the perfect Life of "the Man called Jesus," "Who was in all points tempted like as we are," and yet was righteous and was accepted by the Father (v. 10). He leads them, also, to consider the holy lives of Christians who love their invisible Saviour, and thus proves to them that there must be mysterious Sacramental conduits of grace from His Soul in Heaven to theirs on earth.

Finally, this powerful Advocate is daily persuading men that there is an inevitable conflict between materialism, godless ambition, and irreligion in all its forms, and God, by making them realize that the Prince of this world was condemned from the Cross. For they instinctively approve of the Crucified; they cannot say, even to themselves, that they have no sympathy with Him. But, by their very confession that He is the Perfection of all that is holy and loving, they condemn the spirit of the world which slew Him. The Cross shows them the right standard of success and failure, and the true issues of life and death. Rightly, therefore, did our King bid us "Be of good cheer," for by His Passion, He has indeed "overcome the world."



### **Whitsunday**

#### ***The Anseen Comrade of Our Pilgrimage***

Another of the anxieties which beset the little group of the faithful, gathered there in the Temple, was the fear of an unknown future, through which they must

wander as in a trackless wilderness. Dear Jesus hastened to dispel this cloud. They should have a Divine Guide, His Vicar, Who would reveal to them His Mind and His Will infallibly (v. 13). This completed the gracious promise given them in the Upper Room of their 'other Paraclete' who was to accompany them throughout their pilgrimage (xiv: 16 f.). Every kind of comradeship, possible even to the Divine Spirit, is thus assured to the Church. For He 'abides with us forever,' as our *Comforter*, Who begins giving us His eternal *fellowship* even while we are yet poor sinners. Miss Keller has said that Love will find a way into the minds even of those who are deaf and blind. Has He, Who is the Infinite Love of God, found an entrance into our consciousness? Do we let Him comfort us in trouble? Do we, like our Lord, "rejoice in the Holy Spirit," in our times of prosperity? (St. Luke x: 21 R. V.)

Secondly, 'He abideth by our side,' during our present life as our *Advocate*, always ready with His powerful *help*. With infinite Personal devotion to His clients He espouses their cause as if it were His own, defends them from their enemies, gives them His counsel in their difficulties, and acts as their Solicitor at the bar of Heaven.

Finally He is the *Sanctifier* 'Who is in us for the work of our *salvation*. Let us try always to remember His Presence there. As St. Austin says, He is in our souls, "not only as the impetuous stirring Wind of heroic Energy, nor only as the Flame of Divine Love, but as the Holy Dove," brooding there until we bring forth the graces and virtues which He loves (Acts ii: 2 f; St. John i: 32).

**Monday in the Whitsun Octave****The Spirit of Supplications**

In His office as Sanctifier, the Paraclete must convict, not only the world, but the children of the Church. We can feel Him tugging at our consciences, seeking to convince us of our sin, and to inspire us with repentance and good resolutions. If we are over-tender and scrupulous, we should receive great encouragement from this activity of the Divine Advocate, for we can rest assured that He will show us *plainly* if we have committed even venial sins. But if we are disposed to think of ourselves as moderately good people who have done nothing which especially requires Divine forgiveness, we must let the Holy Spirit of Love lead us to careful, regular, examination of conscience.

Yet we must not rest contented with sinlessness, even if we could attain to it perfectly. It has been rightly said that the blush of shame over wounding Jesus is but the first ray from the Rising Sun of Righteousness. Nor will He be satisfied until we are filled with Divine Light and Love to the farthest corner of our soul. His last care before He left the Temple to begin His Passion was to pray His Father, "That the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them and I in them" (xvii: 26).

Consequently, He would have us judge the "Prince of this world" by a life wholly dedicated to the love of Him. "I pray," He pleaded in His Great Intercession, "that Thou shouldest keep them out of the Evil One" (xvii: 15 R. V. Marg.). He would have us preserved from even resting within the domain of Satan. And through His Grace He makes over to us the victory by which He utterly condemned the Earth Spirit from the

Cross. Rightly, then, may we adopt the words of a saintly bishop, and think of dear Jesus as saying to us through the discourses and the prayer of those early hours of Good Friday: "Ye are sharers of My victory, consorts of My reign, and participants of My glory."



### **Tuesday in the Whitsun Octave**

#### **The Spirit of Truth**

St. John, in his practical, systematic way, gives us, out of our Lord's instructions, what we may call the Stairway of Salvation. Of course, he teaches that the first step is the *love* of Jesus which leads to *faith*. Thus, our Lord said to His Apostles, "Ye *have loved* Me and *have believed* that I came out from God" (v. 27). Accordingly, if we are struggling with a difficult doctrine of our religion, our best method of approach will be by increasing our love of God, through prayer and holy deeds for His sake. "The things of men," said Pascal, "must be understood in order to be loved, but the things of God must be loved in order to be understood."

From faith, we ascend to more perfect *knowledge* of the truths we have already accepted. "We *have believed*, and *know*,"—this was the Apostles' sequence from childlike faith, based simply on their Master's Word, to an ever clearer understanding of the teachings thus implicitly adopted. Even if Divine truth is perceived by a mind which is not prepared for it by love and faith, such learning remains merely intellectual, and barren. Both Caiaphas and Christ agreed that it was "expedient" that "one Man should die for the people," but in the false high priest the knowledge

of that great truth brought forth naught but wickedness (xi: 50; v. 7). The very best and safest way, therefore, for us to gain a deeper knowledge of a Christian dogma is by lovingly using the spiritual exercises which are based upon it. If, for example, we would understand Divine forgiveness better, let us practice regular confession of our sins.

Increased knowledge is a step toward more perfect *prayer*. "In that day," said our Lord, referring to the time following His Resurrection, "ye shall ask Me no question"; and again He said, "In that day ye shall ask," that is, "pray," "in My Name" (vv. 23 R. V. Marg., 26). When their intellectual difficulties had been solved, He expected them to use the spiritual energy thus saved in their devotions. As we advance in understanding our religion, are we developing proportionately in our prayer life?

Finally, we are to ascend from prayer into the Beatific Vision. 'Ask,' dear Jesus urged, 'in order that your joy may be fulfilled,' and the original shows that He was then referring to the perfect consummation of our happiness in Heaven (v. 24). Thus He gives us the principal rule governing Christian prayer, which is, that whatever we ask God for must help us on toward seeing Him face to face in Heaven. This then is His Stairway of Salvation; and it is so truly supernatural that we must have the guidance of the Spirit of Truth in order to mount it. Dear Jesu! Let thy good Spirit lead me forth into the land of righteousness.

9

**Wednesday in the Whitsun Octave****The Spirit of Unity**

Our best way to help Christ obtain the answer to His great Prayer for the unity of the Church (*vv. 1, 21-23*) is to let the Holy Ghost draw us individually into closer union with Him. In Jesus, we shall become, by growing holiness, "partakers" more and more of the Mind and Heart of God, so that our misunderstandings, prejudices, and errors will fall from us (2 St. Pet. i: 4).

For, if the unity of Christendom is to be that for which our Lord besought His Father, it must be like the oneness of the Three Divine Persons in the Blessed Trinity, a unity of mind, will and nature. "That they may be one as We are," so He prayed; and again "that they all may be one as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us" (*vv. 11, 21*). Consequently, Church Unity must be based upon a common *mind* as to Divine truth, a common *will* instinct with love, and a common *nature* regenerated in Christ and nourished by the Sacraments which He and His Apostles have ordained.

This, therefore, is the best way in which we must hasten the answer to what is *par excellence* "the Lord's Prayer." We must revive devotion to God the Holy Ghost, Who is the very Bond of Love in the Holy Trinity Itself, and Who will unite us more closely to God and so to one another in Christ. We have an illustration of what it means when men allow themselves to be thus joined together in the Bond of Divine Charity, in the harmony which existed among the three Apostles, at one time imprisoned together at Rome. St. Peter, St. Paul and St. John were very different in temperament; each one was in fact as unique a per-

sonality as could be found in the calendar, and the Saints are the most individual of people. Yet, through their common relation to Christ, they had become one in "Spirit" with Him and with one another, so that their differences were submerged. St. Peter and St. Paul "exchanged pulpits"; the Apostle to the Gentiles wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, who were St. Peter's parishioners, and the Apostle to the Circumcision wrote his two letters to the Churches of Asia Minor, founded by St. Paul. St. John deepened his already great love for St. Peter, and adopted many of St. Paul's characteristic conceptions, giving his own in return, as we can see from their writings. Then, let us begin now to speed the day of Christian reunion, by realizing, in thought and action, as never before, the truth that we are "joined unto the Lord" and "are one Spirit" with Him and with one another (1 Cor. vi: 17).



### **Thursday in the Whitsun Octave**

#### **The Spirit of Prayer**

Our Saviour's Highpriestly Intercession was no doubt in Aramaic, and the word by which He addressed His Father was therefore "Abba" just as it was in Gethsemane (St. Mark xiv: 36). But we could not well have a more complete contrast than that between the erect, severe, majestic Priest with Hands and Eyes lifted toward Heaven, and the stricken Sufferer in the Garden, lying prostrate upon the earth, while the Sweat of Blood poured down from His whole Body. Whether in the depths of awful affliction, or in calm repose among His Own, He was the same true and perfect Son of God. Now He sends His Holy

Spirit from His Heart unto ours, crying "Abba, Father," both in our seasons of joyful thanksgiving and in those times when "deep calleth unto Deep" (Gal. iv: 6; Ps. xlii: 7).

It is often made an objection to prayer, that our Father knows all that we need before we ask Him, and that our petitions are, therefore, superfluous. But Jesus prayed for that which had been eternally His own and for the due reward of all His labors and sufferings in the world. "And now, O Father," was the one petition, "glorify Thou Me with Thine Own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was"; and the other was, 'Glorify Thy Son (through His Passion and Resurrection)' (*vv.* 5, 1). Evidently, the Christian ought to ask His Heavenly Father even for what he would certainly receive if he never bent his knees in prayer.

So vast is the importance of our devotional life, and so full is it of power to comfort and strengthen us that our Lord purposely said His great Intercession aloud, in order that the Apostles might learn the sacred science of it and thus be always able, wherever they should wander, to claim His own joy for themselves at will. "These things I speak in the world," He said to His Father, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (*v.* 13). Indeed, it was one of the purposes of the Incarnation, that God willed to set us the example by praying with our own human Heart and Lips.

## *SAINT JOHN*

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### **Friday in the Whitsun Octave**

#### **The Spirit of Sonship**

He Who was the Only-begotten of God is surely the very Incarnation of the spirit of sonship. And Jesus attributed everything He possessed, except the essential glory of His Deity, to the gift of His Father. The list which He mentioned gratefully in this one prayer includes the following: (1) The Father's Name, (2) power over all flesh, (3) the vocation to evangelize the whole world, together with the words He was to speak, and the endowment of all things necessary for this work, (4) the Apostles, (5) the Church, collectively and individually, and (6) the additional glory which He had merited for His Manhood. It is fundamental for the children of God, therefore, that we are to ascribe absolutely all we have to our Father.

Nothing would satisfy Him except that He should perfectly identify us with Himself in God's sight. He repeated again and again, in the direct form and its converse, that we belong to Him, and, in Him, to His Father. "They are Thine," He pleads, "and all Mine are Thine, and all Thine are Mine"; and again, "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world" (*vv.* 9, 10, 16). Once more, He said, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"; so that the Heavenly Father would regard us as having the same mission, needs and dangers as those of His own Ministry (*v.* 18). Finally, He claims for us that He has shared with us the glory of revealing God in the world, and that He will be glorified in our lives (*vv.* 10, 22). We ought always to think of Him, in Heaven, commending us in this

way to the Father, so that He gains for us a share of His Own Filial prestige.

We know from His High-priestly Prayer that this is very frequently His petition for us in His continual intercessions: "Father, keep them in Thy Name which Thou hast given Me" (*v.* 11 A. V. Marg.). The Name of God is His Character, or Personality, which was revealed in our Lord; and for the Father to "keep" us in this Name means that He enables us to live in the world as He is in Heaven (*1 St. John iv: 17*). While the Good Shepherd was on earth, He "kept" His Own and "guarded" them in this Name (*v.* 12); and this must still be His continual care for our souls. But the principal means by which He now makes us true children of God, manifesting the "Name" of our Heavenly Father, is by sending His own blessed Spirit of Sonship from His Heart into ours (*Gal. iv: 6*).



### **Saturday in the Whitsun Octave**

#### **The Spirit of Grace and of Glory**

Jesus' plan, as He reveals it in His Prayer of Consecration, was to consecrate Himself, through the Holy Spirit, in order that His disciples might likewise be consecrated, and through them the world be won (*v.* 19). Evidently, then, there are two motives which compel us to coöperate with Him: First, since He is a Priest with the whole world for His parish, He must have Sacraments of Love by which to nourish the souls of men. Secondly, through our consecration, the dear Saviour Who has given us His Life that we may be glorified eternally in Him, is glorified eternally in us through our manifesting that Life to others (*v.* 10). It is mainly through our consecration that God is

enabled to reveal Himself to the world. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them" (*v.* 22); for the glory which He shares with us is "the revelation of the Divine in man."

The Greek word which translates the one our Lord used for "consecrate," or "sanctify," means to "set apart for God." It is one fundamental condition, therefore, of our dedication to our Lord's Service, that it must be whole-hearted. Thus Christ could ask for the consecration of the Apostles only because 'they were not of the world, even as He was not of the world.' The other essential of consecration is that we must be sanctified "in the truth" which is God's Word through Christ, or, in other words the whole Faith of His Church (*vv.* 16 f.).

If we permit Him thus to consecrate us, by His Spirit, as "other Christs" in this dark world, we shall be with Him and behold His Divine loveliness in Eternal Day. "Father," He said, "I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory" (*v.* 24). For the only time, it seems, in all His Ministry, He declared to His Father what He willed. Later, in Gethsemane, where His Own welfare was in danger, He prayed, "Not My Will but Thine be done." But then, because it was our eternal happiness which was in question, He left off from prayer to declare His Divine Will for our salvation. Our Christian hope is sure, therefore; it is based upon the very Will of God, Which is love. Let us conclude this doctrinal half of our Church Year by reciting the children's Act of Hope: "My God, I hope in Thee for grace and for glory, because of Thy mercy, Thy promises and Thy power."

**Passion Week.**

Read St. John xviii

**Passion Sunday****The Divine Victim**

By many unobtrusive touches, St. John seeks to bring before us the Deity of Christ in His Passion. He alone among the Evangelists speaks of His crossing the Brook Kidron, or, more correctly, the Ravine of the Cedars; and his purpose in this is to remind us of David, a type of our Lord, fleeing from his traitorous son by that very path. Again, he suggests that this Second Adam entered a garden to suffer betrayal by His enemy and so to rescue our race from the results of the First Man's betrayal in Eden. As the progenitor of our corrupted humanity had fallen in a garden, the Father of our regenerated nature would lift Him up, there. In a word, our Evangelist leads us to regard Jesus as the Divine Saviour prefigured from the first, and throughout the Old Testament Scriptures. Moreover, he shows us that God was overruling the devices of the Jews and bringing in the Divine order even through their machinations: "Jesus therefore," he says, "knowing all the things that were coming upon Him, went forth" to meet His enemies and fulfill His own plan for our salvation (*v. 4*).

In order to arrest this one, unresisting Man, the high priests had obtained a cohort, 600 soldiers, besides sending two bands of their own officers. Yet, He needed to speak only the two words, "I am," and the whole band fell prostrate at His feet. This and the healing of Malchus' ear were two last signs of His Deity which He gave His Apostles in order that their faith might not fail when they saw Him die the death of a criminal slave.

Royal, Divine, as He was, we must bear in mind with deep and tender devotion that it cost Him dear to take upon Him all the sin of mankind from Adam unto the last men who shall witness His Second Advent. For three hours He struggled in Gethsemane, before He could stagger to His Feet under that dread universe of wickedness. As St. Austin says, "He groaned, He wept, He cried aloud. How difficult is it for Him to rise up Who is weighted down by such a mass of inveterate evil." Surely He deserves our whole hearts, by the double claim of His Deity which loved us infinitely well, and of His Humanity, which bore our sins upon the Tree of shame.



### **Monday in Passion Week**

#### **The Deciders**

A flood of light is cast upon our Lord's Passion by two notes which St. John gives us: that Christ "went forth over the Ravine of the Cedars," and that, after His arrest, He was led to Annas first (*vv.* 1, R. V. Marg., 13). For, just across the Kidron, stood two cedars under which were built the spacious "booths of the sons of Annas"; and it is from these trees that our Evangelist significantly names the valley the "Ravine of the Cedars." The buildings belonged to a kind of corporation, headed by the unscrupulous old high priest, which had a monopoly of the sale of doves for sacrifice. They stood on the Mount of Olives, not far from Gethsemane; and very probably it was here that our Lord endured the first of the seven false trials. It would be a savage joy to the "sons of Annas," whose whispers of false witness are cursed by the Tal-

mud as being the hissings of deadly serpents, to torture Jesus. For He had twice broken up their lucrative sale of doves,—to the poor, at extortionate prices.

It was thus the world, with its greed of money and power and its unscrupulous craft, which was the most relentless enemy of our Lord. But the high priests would probably have been harmless without the assistance of the Pharisees, who hated their own Messiah because He rebuked them for loveless formalism and bigotry and pride. If it was the world which crucified Jesus in order to conserve its "business interests," it was aided by the Church of God, grown compliant toward the world and cold toward Him.

The other principal ally of the high priests' party was Pilate, who represents weak people, of good intentions, but with also a willingness to compromise with the world and placate it. By every expedient he could devise, he strove to win the consent of the false accusers to what he knew was a simple act of justice. The folly of such half-measures with Jesus' mortal enemies, however, appears from the fact that they served only to embolden and enrage the Jews, until they demanded the most disgraceful and agonizing of all death penalties. Evidently, if we are to keep Jesus safe from crucifixion in our hearts, we must declare a war against His foes, in which there shall be no quarter given, and no discharge during this life.



### **Tuesday in Passion Week**

**St. Peter and St. John**

When our Lord announced again, on the way to Gethsemane, that all of His Apostles would be offended because of Him, and would scatter from His side,

that night, there was a general murmur of protest (St. Matt. xxvi: 35). But, as in the Upper Room, it was St. Peter who vehemently insisted that he would go with his Master to prison and death (St. John xiii: 36-38). St. John remained silent; yet it was he who continued steadfastly at our Lord's side. For we know from his intimate knowledge of what passed even at the private interviews of Pilate with Jesus, that he continued with Him throughout the Acts of His Passion, from Gethsemane to Calvary. What a consolation it is to know that our Saviour had the unspeakable comfort of His Beloved Disciple's fellowship and sympathy during His sufferings! But each one of us is the disciple whom Jesus loves, and we will abide with Him faithfully, if we accept his rebukes in humble silence.

After St. Peter had fled a little distance from Christ, he recovered Himself, and "followed Him afar off to the court of the high priest" (St. Matt. xxvi: 58). That was the second mistake of the dear, loving, bungling Apostle. He remained at a distance from Divine protection, when he was about to be sorely tempted. St. John kept close to Christ. He also was tempted to deny his Master, for he was known to the household of the high priest, and everywhere he looked he met the glance of ridicule and the curling lip of scorn, because he was the friend of the despised Nazarene. His prospects, his prestige in the palace, were being ruined, he knew. Yet not once did he falter because he was being constantly inflamed at the Divine Furnace in Jesus' Heart.

He is beautifully true to his character as the Apostle of Love in his care to avoid mentioning the ugly details about St. Peter's denials and to excuse him as

well as he can. Thus he omits the oaths and curses; and is careful to show that the form of the questions put to the older Apostle were such as to *indicate* the disloyal answers. Besides, he tells us that the servants and officers were standing around when the maid-servant first asked him if he was not Jesus' disciple; that the second time he was pressed by more than one; and that, on the last occasion, he was questioned by a relative of Malchus,—all details which must have greatly increased his terror and confusion, and which therefore mitigated the sinfulness of his disloyalty (*vv.* 18, 25 f.). Let us be apostles of love, who suppress our own merits, and excuse the faults of our brethren.



### **Wednesday in Passion Week**

#### **The Fall of St. Peter**

The eldest of the Apostles had been plainly and repeatedly warned by his Master that he would not have the strength to resist temptation against his loyalty, that night. Yet he ventured to place himself in the way of a severe spiritual trial, in the midst of his enemies and apart from the protection of his Lord. This error is indicated by St. John, for our warning, by the word which he has chosen for the "court" of the high priests' residence; for it is the same as that which he uses for the sheepfold of the Good Shepherd (*v.* 15 R. V., cp. x: 1, 16). How often our overmastering temptations have arisen from the fact that we had gone into the company of those who would weaken our faith and cool our love instead of into the flock of our true Pastor!

The dispositions of St. Peter were exactly those

which prepare a soul for grave sin. For, first, he yielded to depression. As St. Matthew tells us, he seated himself with the servants who had arrested his Lord "to see the end"; he had given up all hope. Secondly, he gave way to a spirit of self-indulgence. While he knew that Christ was suffering both bodily and spiritual agony, he sat down by the fire to warm himself. Finally, he was restless. When St. John saw him, he was standing (*v.* 18), but St. Luke and St. Matthew show that at times he was seated; hence it appears that he was constantly changing his position. These then are the steps which lead to grave disloyalty: boasting, keeping afar from Jesus, depression, self-indulgence, and restlessness.

The question arises, however, as to why St. John narrated the fall of his beloved friend and fellow Apostle, especially since it had been recorded substantially in the other three Gospels. The answer is rightly given, as follows: "This instance of human frailty, in one so exalted (an instance which the life of the great Exemplar Himself could not afford), is given us with four-fold emphasis that none may presume and none despair."



### **Thursday in Passion Week**

#### **Jesus Seeking the Safety of Others**

While our Saviour voluntarily surrendered Himself to the will of His mortal foes, He took the utmost care that He should not lose one of His disciples (*vv.* 8 f.). He had planned to draw to Himself the attention of the party sent to arrest Him, and allow the Apostles to escape; because, at that hour, just before dawn, after the strain of the most tragic of all nights,

and in the confusion, terror and grief of it all, He knew that they would not be steadfast. Pursuant to this purpose He immediately healed the wound of Malchus, in order that St. Peter might escape arrest; and later, when questioned about His disciples before the high priest, He skillfully diverted their fire of insults and blows against Himself (St. Luke xxii: 51, *vv.* 19 ff.).

It is, however, His charity toward Judas which is most amazing. St. John characteristically notes, and mentions, that the traitor was standing with the Jews when Jesus said "I am" (*v.* 5). Divine Love intended that those words should strike responsive chords in the memory of the false Apostle. On what memorable occasions they had been spoken! When He had declared to the Jews, "Ye shall die in your sins if ye believe not that I am," and "Before Abraham was, I am"; when He had come to them through the storm on the Lake, saying, "I am, fear not!" And only the evening before, in the Upper Room, when He had foretold this very perfidy of Judas and had explained, "Now I tell you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am" (*viii:* 24, 58; *vi:* 20; *xiii:* 19). Perhaps, the dear Christ hoped, some warning or appeal, associated with His repeated assertion in these words of His identity with Jehovah, might strike home to that false heart and bring it to repentance.

There was one other upon whom the boundless charity of Christ was spent prodigally, and that was Caiaphas. That false priest was still in His thoughts, after He had been scourged, and when He was about to be crucified (*xix:* 11). "He that delivered Me unto thee," He said to Pilate sorrowfully, "hath the greater

sin," that is, a greater sin even than Pilate's. He had forgotten His own "agony and dying," in longing for the conversion of Caiaphas. Surely, then, no one of us need ever despair. At least we have never done more evil than Judas and Caiaphas, and the Jesu's love, the dear "Hound of Heaven," followed them to the end.



### **The Compassion of the Blessed Virgin**

#### **Sin Crucifying Christ**

It is not a figure of speech, but a terribly real fact, that, in the last analysis, it was neither Romans nor Jews, but our sins, which crucified Christ. We can trace His Death directly to the three main sources of evil in our human heart; of these His slayers were merely exponents. For, first, *self-will* rejected the Saviour Who was not conformed to its own desires. The Jews "laid information against Jesus as a dangerous character; their real complaint against Him was precisely this that He was not dangerous. Pilate executed Him on the ground that His Kingdom was of this world; the Jews procured His execution, precisely because it was not."

Secondly, the Deicide was due to Pilate's *inability to appreciate spiritual values*. Our Lord offered him the Kingdom of Truth, and was met by the half-despairing, half-cynical question, "What is truth?" It seemed to him perfectly intangible and unreal; his office, power and wealth were the actual values, and he dared not risk them. Tiberius was a jealous Emperor, and was already frowning upon Sejanus, Pilate's patron, who was, in fact, executed the following year. Cæsar was very proud of his excellent provincial governments, also, and knew that the Governor of the

Jews had three times all but caused a rebellion among his subjects. Add to this that it was enough under the *lex majestatis* to be accused of treason, and decapitation would follow almost certainly. In comparison with these interests, truth was negligible. Is there not the making of a Pilate in most of us? Are we not prone to love things more than God?

Both Pilate and the Jews personified the third evil which crucified our Lord, that is, *pride*. When the governor finally allowed himself to be forced to condemn One Whom he had publicly declared to be entirely innocent, he thenceforth desired only to take revenge for the blow to his Roman pride, by heaping ridicule upon "the King of the Jews." Accordingly, he brought the meek Sufferer forth, arrayed in robes of mock royalty, and crowned with a conqueror's wreath, but of thorns, and, it seems, seated Him upon a judgment seat in burlesque state (xix: 13, literally translated). The Jews, on their part, repudiated Him as their King, and, in order to show their utter scorn of Him, had His Cross placed in the center with a crucified robber on each Hand in parody of a king among his councillors. But, amid all this execration of Him, there was a little group which followed Him to the end and gave Him their deepest sympathy, their consuming love and their adoration. The central figure of that little band was His Virgin Mother. Let us to-day thank God for her Compassion.



### **Saturday in Passion Week**

#### **Examination of Conscience**

It is a result of our pride which was the main murderer of Incarnate God, that we naturally shrink from

sincerely and honestly looking our consciences in the face. The correctives of this self-conceit are a deepening hatred of "the sin which doth so easily beset us," and a stern resolution against duplicity with our own hearts (Jer. xvii: 9). Now it will enable us almost to love these two austere qualities, if we see self-deception at work in the souls of the Jews. Their own rabbinic law forbade them to try a criminal on a capital charge at night, because of the likelihood of injustice and foul play; but they condemned Jesus in secrecy, before dawn, and then held a purely formal meeting in daylight to confirm the sentence. They bribed the witnesses against the Prisoner, but followed the legal form of examining them singly, whereupon their testimony unexpectedly conflicted (St. Mark xiv: 55-59). A day should have intervened between the sentence and the execution; this law they evaded by getting Pilate to condemn Him so that he would also set the time. But not for the world would they enter the Gentile governor's house, because it had not been ceremonially cleansed from leaven. It would seem incredible that souls could so delude themselves, if it were not that we are so liable to put our own trust in *forms* of prayer and external respectability.

In the priestly persecutors of Jesus, we see to what an awful depth souls may sink through self-deception. For it seems that they went from the two false trials of Jesus before the Sanhedrin to the offering of the morning sacrifice in the temple, and from this devotion back to Pilate's tribunal. The very voices which had but just been raised in the praise of Jehovah were now lifted in the savage cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

We must, therefore, be firm in examining ourselves

daily, especially as to our besetting temptation. For this is the principal hold which Satan has upon us. Let us loathe his touch. St. John could not bear to mention his name in this Gospel, except the one time when he must speak of his entrance into Judas' heart (xiii: 27). There is a great Ideal before us which we are to strive after through self-examination, and this is the Perfection of Jesus. Satan came feeling and searching through that Immaculate Humanity with his filthy fingers, seeking for one single weakness by which he could claim Christ as his own (xiv: 30). And we must be looking and longing for the time to come, when we, like our Lord, can say, "The Prince of this world hath nothing in me."



**Holy Week.**

Read St. John<sup>xix</sup>

## **Palm Sunday**

### **The Humiliation of Our King**

On the docket of the Governor's Court that first Good Friday, were the cases of three robbers who had assumed the cloak of patriotic insurrectionists in order to hide their crimes. Their leader, Barabbas, had also committed murder. All three were condemned to be crucified. Now, it occurred to Pilate that he could save Jesus by allowing the people to choose between His release and that of the desperate homicide, thinking that they would really have no alternative but to prefer the innocent Man. But the people chose the criminal, with the result that the Son of God was crucified on the Cross which had been prepared for the condemned convict, and between his accomplices. Even the Name and Title of our Lord seem to have been

involved in His utter abjection, for the name of the murderous robber was probably Jesus Barabbas, or "Saviour Son of the Father,"—an opportunity which would surely not be lost by bitter tongues.

The Roman soldiers in the Prætorium were not slow to see the rare chance for savage sport with this "King of the Jews." Accordingly, after they had scourged Him, they put upon Him an old purple gown, and a chaplet of thorns as a parody on the victor's wreath of Tiberius. Then they approached Him one by one, in a burlesque of the court customs, with the genuflection of pretended reverence and a blow in His Face instead of the kiss of homage. Afterward, when He had been condemned to be crucified, they called together the whole cohort to participate in this amusing torture (cp. St. Matt. xxvii: 27).

When at last they permitted Him to take up His Cross and go forth to Calvary, what a contrast the procession presented to His entrance into the City only the Sunday before! (xii: 12 ff.) Then, it was the march of triumph up to His Capital, amid the hosannas of His people and over the palm and olive branches cast before Him by the children; now it was the *Via Dolorosa*, and the King moved heavily away from the City, with the placard of His accusation hanging from His Neck and laden with the gibbet on which He was to die. Surely He spared Himself no mortification which would make His example a more effective cure of our pride. In our time of temptation to sensitiveness, or vanity, or self-assertion, let us remember Jesus bearing His Cross, lest the torture of His dear Heart for us should have been in vain.

**Monday in Holy Week****The Weakness of the Crucified**

At Pilate's side stood a lictor, with his official axe, about the handle of which were bound rods for the chastisement of offenders of the higher classes. But the flagellation inflicted upon Jesus was that which was appointed for slaves convicted of heinous crimes. It was administered by two soldiers who stood, one on each side, behind and above Him, and laid on their blows alternately, with the terrible Roman scourge having seven thongs weighted with lead. Many persons succumbed under the scourging. Yet no outcry, complaint or protest came from the meek Lamb of God!

Even the Roman Governor was awed by the bearing of Jesus. He had ordered the Flagellation on the very ground that the defendant was innocent. 'I have found no fault in this Man,' was his judgment, 'I will *therefore* chastise Him and release Him.' The 'chastisement,' which would have been with the lictor's rods, had become the Scourging and still the Victim endured all with the same unearthly look of gentle resignation. Surely if the people saw Him thus, they would consent to His release. Therefore, Pilate brought Him forth, the King of Love, revealing so plainly in His Face His patient willingness to die for His people, and showed Him to them, saying, "Behold! The Man!"

What is believed to have been the stone pillar at which the Flagellation was given has been found. If we entered the room where it stands, how immediately we would approach and kneel down, and how lovingly we would look upon that to which our Lord was bound when He suffered for us the healing stripes! But it

will be far more acceptable to Him, if we will kneel down in our own homes, and promise Him that in honor of His patient love at His Scourging, we will strive always to bear injuries meekly.



## **Tuesday in Holy Week**

### **The Placard**

Pilate himself directed the inscribing of our Lord's Name and Title in three languages on the placard which took the place of the ordinary accusation; and perhaps the report that Jesus had "made Himself the Son of God," united with the Divine Holiness of the Sufferer, had suggested to the governor the universal import of His Death (*vv. 7 f.*). Certainly, he 'told it out among the heathen that the Lord is King.' For Hebrew was the language of the Jews, Latin the official tongue, and Greek the common speech of the Empire. Thus Jesus was proclaimed to be the Sovereign of Jew and Gentile alike.

There was more significance than this, however, in our Lord's "title," for it symbolized the three main ways in which the world had been made ready for His coming. The language of the Old Testament suggested the religious instruction of the race; that of the Empire represented the social preparation through the spread of Roman civilization; and Greek was the medium through which God had provided the training of philosophy and an international tongue.

But the writing on the Cross is Jesu's appeal to each one of us for his whole being. He would have our mind; that He signifies by procuring that His Title of Kingship should be written in the intellectual tongue.

He seeks our will, our imperial faculty, by asserting His royal claim over us in the Imperial language. He pleads for the heart of each one of the faithful in the speech of religion. And He seals His threefold claim by being crucified for love of us; that all our self-love may be crucified for love of Him.



### **Wednesday in Holy Week**

#### **Christ Turns to the Gentiles**

Our dear Saviour was condemned on the Pavement between the Sanctuary of the Temple and the Prætorium overlooking it. The Hebrew name for this stone platform, Gabbatha, in fact, means the "Back of the House (of God)" (*v.* 13). As Christ stood facing Pilate and with His Back to the temple, His very position was symbolic of the tragic truth that He had turned from the ancient people of God to the Gentiles, and prophetic of the day for which we hope when the Jews shall be one with us in His Mystical Body.

Through their "chief priests," the official spokesmen of the ancient theocracy, not the mob, nor even the Pharisees, Israel publicly renounced all claim to be the Kingdom of God. "We have no King but Cæsar," they cried (*v.* 15). Moreover, they had begun by repudiating Jesus as the Christ, and now they ended by rejecting the Christ altogether; and with that unparalleled act of apostasy, they, representing their people, finally abdicated their ancient liberty. Henceforth by their own confession, they were as much under the tyranny of Cæsar as any Gentile tribe. Never since have they regained their lost sovereignty as a nation. Jesus Christ alone gives civil and religious liberty,

through the conquest of self which He teaches from the pulpit of His Cross. But we share the inspired hope of St. Paul that, at the last, Israel also shall be gathered into the universal, free, State of Salvation (Rom. xi: 26).

When, at the instigation of the Jews the soldiers thrust a spear into our Lord's side, St. John remembered the prophecy of Zechariah: "They shall look on Him Whom they pierced" (*zv.* 34, 37). And he tells us that the Day will break when this same Jesus will come "with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him" (Rev. i: 7). Shall the Faithful of the Old Dispensation be among "the tribes of the earth" which "mourn," at that Second Advent? Or shall they see in the pierced Heart of their Messiah the open Door of His Fold into which their nation has at last entered? The answer will depend upon the prayers, the holy lives and the Christ-like charity of Christians.



### **Maundy Thursday**

#### ***The Preparation of the Passover***

To the young Apostle who was at our Lord's side through all the heartbreaking trial in the Prætorium, He appeared, most of all, as the Lamb of God. So gentle and uncomplaining, so patient and loving was He, through it all, that St. John could think of nothing but the innocent victims to be slain that day. Thus he reminds us, in connection with the final sentencing of Christ, that "it was the preparation of the passover" (*zv.* 14). Again, when the sour wine was lifted to the parched Lips of the Crucified, he noticed that the

sponge had been put upon hyssop, one of the herbs always eaten at the paschal meal (*v.* 29) ; and in relating the fact that the soldiers did not break our Lord's Legs, he applies to this the rule for preparing the lamb of the passover, "a bone of him shall not be broken" (*v.* 36, cp. Ex. xii: 46). Surely the Apostle of Love means to teach us that Jesus is our Lamb Whom we receive Whole in our Christian Paschal Supper.

The Blood and Water which flowed from His riven Heart were a proof that even in Death He still possessed mysterious Life. The Effusion was, also, a fulfillment of the rabbinic tradition that, when Moses struck the rock, blood flowed from it, and then water. But, while it was a sign to his people of the Old Covenant, it was full of precious promise of cleansing and quickening Sacraments, to the Catholic Church.

So eager was our Saviour to give Himself for mankind, that there was in reality only one point in which His intention in the Passion differed from that of His enemies. Their desire was to take His Life, and He wanted nothing so much as to give it to them: they cried out, "His Blood be on us and on our children," and He longed to pour it over their hearts and consciences. But they disagreed in this, that they meant to waste His Precious Blood or to invoke It as a curse upon their race, while He passionately desired to give It to them as a source of eternal blessings. And the sweetest reparation we can make to Him for the ingratitude of the Jews is always to receive Him for our everlasting benefit.

**Good Friday****Love Reigns From the Cross**

As Royal as Jesus was all through His Life, He was never so perfectly the King of Divine Charity as when He reigned from His Throne on the Cross. Not only did He pray for His executioners as they nailed Him down, absolve the penitent robber and provide for His dear Mother and Beloved Disciple, but He gave up His whole Mind and Will for those six hours of supreme agony to striving for the conversion of the Jews. Four times they had shouted, as with one voice, for His destruction: "Not this Man, but Barabbas"; "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"; "He ought to die"; "Away with Him, Away with Him, Crucify Him!" (xviii: 40; *vv.* 6, 7, 15). And now for the fourth time He cried out seeking their salvation (cp. vii. 28, 37; xii: 44; St. Matt. xxvii: 50). After they had brought Him to the cruelest and vilest of deaths, His Divine revenge upon them was to say His last prayer on the Cross "with a loud voice," in order to prove that He was voluntarily yielding up His Spirit into His Father's Hands, in the hope that they might even then accept Him as the Son of God (cp. St. Mark xv: 39).

The four soldiers who were guarding Him had divided His outer clothing among them and were dicing for His seamless robe, treating Him as being already dead. With them, St. John contrasts the four women who stood in a semicircle around the dear pierced Feet, protecting Him; to them He was the King of Eternal Life (*vv.* 23 ff.).

The three Words from the Cross recorded in the Fourth Gospel are wonderfully characteristic of Sovereign Love. By one gentle decree, He indicated for

all time that the Christian home should be established and built up around His Cross (*vv.* 26 f.). After many hours spent in planning for the salvation of our whole race, He spoke again, saying "I thirst," in order to fulfill a small provision of His rule of life in the Scriptures (*v.* 28). For this King is perfect both in plans of world-wide scope, and in the tiniest details. But this was the last act of obedience required from Him. Now He could say, "It is finished"; His redemptive Work, the fulfillment of all God's promises under the Old Covenant, and His Own development as our High Priest had been perfectly consummated (cp. Heb. v: 8 ff.). Therefore rightfully He reigns from the Cross over the Realm of Love,—this Monarch with His Crown of Thorns and the Spike for a sceptre! This day He claims our hearts afresh. He shall be the Master of our Destiny.

### **Holy Sabbath**

#### **Consecrating the Eleventh Hour**

St. Joseph of Arimathæa, by his example, teaches us the great lesson that it is never too late to mend a bad matter. He had kept his discipleship secret for fear of the Jews throughout Christ's life, and it would have been natural for him now that the Lord was dead, to continue suppressing his allegiance. If he touched the dead Body he would be unclean for the greatest feast of his religion; his failure to take part in the festival services would precipitate the dishonor and scorn which would be heaped upon him by all his old friends. St. Mark reveals to us that only after a severe struggle with himself he, "having dared, went in unto Pilate and craved the Body of Jesus" (xv: 43, literally translated).

If we follow him, we will never say that things have gone so far that we can do nothing to remedy them. St. Joseph might well have considered that he could accomplish nothing in the few hours of Good Friday which remained before the Festival would begin. But see what he was able to do! First of all, he inspired the courage of St. Nicodemus, who followed him with an hundredweight of spices for the sacred Body. But far more important than this, he with his companion provided one of the strongest proofs of the Resurrection, by binding our Lord's Limbs with the strips of linen and weighting them with the myrrh and aloes, until it was obviously impossible for Him to move except in a supernatural way. Let their experience teach us to make the most of a spiritual crisis, or even of a disaster.

But when we do turn away from our failure, or sin, to our Lord, we must bring our best. St. Joseph gave his new tomb, which had been hewn out of the solid rock, for his own body, and was enclosed in his garden. Let us provide Jesus a heart which has been cleansed from our fault by penitence, and beautified by those rare exotics, the Christian virtues.



**For Two Weeks.**

Read St. John xx

### **Easter Day**

#### **Lobe Receiving the Easter Christ**

So preëminent is the Divine Mystery commemorated in this Queen Feast, that all Three Persons of the Godhead are revealed as participating in it. The Father is often said to have raised our Lord from the dead (cp. Acts iii: 15). The Incarnate Son declared that, if the Jews destroyed the Temple of His Body, in

three days He would raise it up (St. John ii: 19 ff.). The Holy Spirit, St. Paul indicates, "raised up Jesus from the dead," in the same way that He shall also quicken our mortal bodies at our resurrection (Rom. viii: 11). All the Infinite Love of the Blessed Trinity was poured out upon the Risen Christ, and upon us through Him.

That Divine Charity planned, moreover, to disclose the glorious truth to Jesus' friends, in the way each could best receive it. The Beloved Disciple needed only to see the open sepulchre, the empty cerements, and the napkin neatly folded by the familiar Hands (vv. 6 ff.). St. Mary Magdalen knew her Lord when He spoke to her with the "Personal Voice of love" (vv. 14-16). To the ten Apostles, He showed the sacred wounds in Hands and Feet and Side, and they believed (v. 20). But St. Thomas demanded the opportunity of thrusting his finger into the Print of the nails, and, with the old meekness and charity, Jesus submitted to his test (27 f.). Is it not a pure joy to see "these slowly widening victories of faith" in the Easter Christ?

With the development of love and faith, knowledge also grew. St. John seems to have gained from his first view of the empty tomb only a belief that somehow the Lord was again alive. He revealed Himself openly to the blessed Magdalen, but she, not yet knowing Him "as the Son of God with power," addressed Him still by the old, inferior, title "Master." The Apostolic Band recognized Him as "the Lord" when they had seen the Marks of His Passion. Finally, St. Thomas, reaping the advantage of the revelations to the others, voiced the confession of them all when he cried, "My Lord and my God." Be his faith ours, and

with it, that extraordinary blessing of our Lord which He promised to those who have not seen and yet believe.

### Easter Monday

#### The Personal Love of Jesus for Each Soul

Among the few details which St. John thought important enough to mention for the fourth time in his Gospel was the early visit of the holy women to the sepulchre. The blessed Magdalen arrived there well before dawn, having outsped the others. But there was One Who had risen even earlier than she and Who came to meet her, bringing her the richest of blessings (vv. 1 ff., 11-17). We could hardly have more impressive teaching that our Lord loves to have us seek Him, in prayer and at Holy Communion, before the distractions of the day begin, and while the dew of grace is at its freshest on our hearts.

It was the personal love for Him of the holy penitent to which He thus immediately responded. So close and so dear to her was He, that she loved even His dead Body as 'her Lord'; and her devotion to Him made her feel strong enough to "take Him away" on her weak shoulders. He seems, however, to have waited until she had an even deeper sense of her personal loss. When she reported to the Apostles, "They have taken away *the Lord* out of the Sepulchre, and *we* know not where they have laid Him," He did not come to her; but no sooner had she said to the angels, "They have taken away *my Lord*, and *I* know not where they have laid Him," than He gave her the unspeakable joy of His Presence.

But why, then, did He direct her not to hold to His Feet? (v. 17 A. V. Marg.) She was making the **very**

natural mistake of trying to cling to what she supposed was the old relationship restored. Christ, she assumed, had become like St. Lazarus, after he was brought back from the dead. But He gently instructed her that He would, through His Resurrection and Ascension, grant to His Own a much more real and precious spiritual relationship. Therefore, now, for the first time, He spoke of the Church as His "brethren." In His Godhead He dwells in each one of us continually, and with His Risen Manhood He is in our hearts for a few priceless moments after each Communion. Shall we not hold fast to the Feet of this Divine Brother, as long as we may and with our deepest personal love for Him?

### Easter Tuesday

#### Complete Devotion to the Risen Christ

It will help us to devote our whole being to Christ, if we make a simple analysis of love, guided by the Scriptures. There is, first, *natural* love, called by the Greeks Eros, which springs entirely from the emotions. It is used in the Bible only in the Old Testament, and there but twice in an honorable sense; once of the fondness of Ahasuerus for his Queen, and again in the Divine command to love Holy Wisdom (Esther ii: 17; Prov. iv: 6). The Holy Scriptures, therefore, indicate that our natural affections are not evil, but are to be devoted to Christ, the Wisdom of God, and to our family and friends in Him. St. Ignatius, on his way to martyrdom, wrote: "My love (*eros*) is crucified." His passions were consecrated, with Jesus, on the Cross.

Secondly, there is what we may call *relational* or *devotional* love (*philia*), which is devotion to Christ

as our Friend, Brother, and Saviour. This proceeds from the will and the emotions. It is a beautiful and holy affection, having a spiritual counterpart in the Love between the Father and the Son in the Blessed Trinity (v:20). We should often stimulate it, and strive to increase it, by the use of a cross or a crucifix in our devotions, by thinking of Jesus' Personal love for us, and by frequenting the Blessed Sacrament.

The third kind of love (*agape*), however, is the highest of all; for this *Divine* Charity constitutes the very Nature of God. It is elicited from the Christian will, and is for the Blessed Trinity and for the souls of our fellow-men. It is of so unstrained a quality that it extends to the whole world, not excluding our enemies, and strives for the salvation of all. It was the bond which united Jesus to His Beloved Disciple; and nothing makes Him so joyful as to see this noblest devotion developed in our souls, because it makes us most like Himself.

### **Wednesday in Easter Week**

#### **Discerning the Risen Christ**

Divine Charity is the calmest, most disinterested and most powerful of all kinds of love. Why was it that our Lord gave it to St. John, His youngest Apostle, in addition to the "natural" and "relational" affection which He bestowed impartially upon all the Band? It was because St. John was *receptive* of the highest love. From the first he discerned, however dimly, the perfect Charity of his Master's Personality and, although feebly, responded to it. He was always less emotional and more penetrating than the others.

Accordingly, we find him forever being surpassed in action, and excelling in keenness of vision. Thus,

he seems to have been the first to discern the Messiah in Jesus; but St. Andrew, representing rather "relational," or "devotional," love, outstripped him in bringing his brother to Christ. At the sepulchre, again, it was fervent, impulsive Peter who first entered, but it was the Apostle of Love who, seeing the cerements, discerned the Risen Christ. Finally, when their Master appeared at the lakeside, St. John discerned Him in the strange Form, but St. Peter sprang overboard and swam to Him.

The lesson for us is that we ought not permit our devotion to Jesus to stop short of His Godhead. Not content with natural love for His dear Humanity, nor even with fervent devotion to His Sacred Heart and His Sacramental Presence, we must, like St. John, often discern His Person and respond to His highest, Divine, Love. For then will He lead us to know and love the Father and the Holy Spirit, as never before, and we shall be His beloved disciples.



### **Thursday in Easter Week**

#### **The Blessed Virgin and the Resurrection**

In all the world there was but one person who expected the Resurrection of Christ, and that one was His Mother. Although there were Old Testament prophecies and the constant teaching of Jesus to instruct His disciples, none of the others heard this double witness of God (v. 9; St. Luke xxiv: 17-27). But the dear pondering heart of the Blessed Virgin had become certain that He would rise from the dead. Otherwise, though she was the most heroic of the martyrs, she could not have "stood" before the Cross.

Her faith explains, in part, the fact that St. John was the first of the Apostles to believe in the Resurrection. Even while he "knew not the Scriptures," and had before him only the same evidence that occasioned simply wonder in St. Peter, he was convinced. Surely the Blessed Mother had been comforting him with her own assurance that Jesus would indeed rise again.

Because she believed so perfectly, moreover, she was left to wait for a visit from her Risen Son, until He had shepherded the souls which stood in mortal need of Him (cp. St. Luke xv: 4, 7). Even when news of His Resurrection was brought to the very door, it seems not to have been for her (*v.* 2); there was no tragedy in her heart as there was in that of the Magdalen, or that of poor desolate Peter. Do we think that we are derelicts when God and His servants pass us by? Ought we not rather to consider that He is trusting us, as He confided in His Mother, to be true to Him, without His special favors?



### **Friday in Easter Week**

#### ***The Tears of Jesus***

To-day let us, from the midst of our Easter joys and blessings, look back and recollect what it cost our Lord to give us the Paschal Feast. It will be convenient for us to gather our thoughts about the three occasions, when, we are told, He wept. The first time was at the grave of St. Lazarus, when, as the Greek word means literally, He "shed tears" in sorrow for His dead friend (*xi*: 35). In His grief, and His eager desire to revive His disciple, we see a picture of His love for each one of us, and His far greater longing to burst the bonds

of death and raise men to a share in His own Resurrection.

On Palm Sunday, again, He wept as He came into view of the beautiful City, and foresaw its utter destruction (St. Luke xix: 41). The verb here means that He burst into a flood of tears and wept aloud, so great was His sorrow over the passing of His ancient Church. But how much greater was His care for His own Mystical Body, which He knew would be stricken as if in death by His Crucifixion, and must be raised to glorious new life by His Resurrection.

We are prepared, therefore, for His grapple with our enemy, death, in Gethsemane. There He must do battle, by prayer and suffering, for each one of us individually, and for the very life of His Church. Therefore, He "offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears," St. Paul reveals to us, "unto Him that was able to save Him *out from death*, and was heard" (Heb. v: 7 R. V.). His pleading was not to escape the Passion, for only through the grave could He pass to His Resurrection. But He besought His Father, with an agony of weeping, that He might issue triumphantly "*out from death*," for our sake. And He was heard. His Human Nature was empowered to conquer the great foe of mankind, and He came forth to us on Easter Day with the gift of an endless life.



### **Saturday in Easter Week**

#### **The Re-Birth of Faith, Hope and Love**

It is impossible to exaggerate the preëminent value, to the Apostles, of Jesus' Resurrection. If we take only St. Paul. St. Peter and St. John, we shall find that

they attributed to the Risen Christ the renascence of the essential Theological Virtues. From the hour the Radiance of Easter shone down upon him on the Damascus Road, the Apostle of the Gentiles considered that the Christian Religion was nothing without that glorious Presence. If Christ was not risen, *faith* was foolish; he was a false witness deceiving thousands; his sufferings, such as his battle with wild beasts at Ephesus, were in vain, for he was still in his sins (1 Cor. xv: 15, 17, 32).

St. Peter tells us, plainly, how his dead *hope* sprang to life again when our Saviour came to him on the first Easter Day. "God," he wrote long afterward, "hath begotten us again unto a living hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 St. Pet. i: 3 R. V.). He could never forget that afternoon when he had been sitting, too utterly disconsolate even to weep, and then in an instant all was changed, when he saw the familiar Form of His beloved Master, and once more heard His Voice (St. Luke xxiv: 34).

Sixty-five years had passed, after the Resurrection, before the Apostle of Love recorded what it meant to him, but the impression was not a whit the less vivid from the passage of time. "That Which we have heard, Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life," he wrote to his "little children," "That declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 St. John i: 1 ff.; St. Luke xxiv: 39 f.). Thus *love*, the spiritual life and union with God through Christ, came forth from the grave with Him. Are we using His precious Easter gifts, Faith, Hope and Love? Are we exercising these virtues, and praying for their increase, so

that through them we may know and serve our Risen Lord better?



## **The first Sunday After Easter**

### **Victory Through Jesus Risen**

Our Saviour rose to change the whole face of the earth; and the history of the centuries which have followed the first Easter proves that His Life has been the one preëminently redeeming force in the history of mankind. If a traveler had set out in 68 A.D. to find the greatest thing in the world, the Greek would have said to him, "You must see Athens"; the Roman, "You must visit the Mistress of the World," and the Jew, "The Temple is certainly what you seek." But the temple, and old Athens, and the proud Rome of the Cæsars, lie in ruins, while the power of the Resurrection has transformed the world. Music, painting, liberty, and charity toward the poor and weak are among the gifts of civilization which have received their inspiration from the faith of Christ Risen.

By His Victory, God, not Satan, has been shown to be the master of the world. Even the recent War has been overruled for our good; the spirit of self-sacrifice has revived; the need of the Christian Faith has been brought home to many hearts; and the severed parts of the Body of Christ have been drawn nearer to reunion. Moreover, in spite of countless foes without and within, the Church is steadily gaining ground. The Bishop of London has said that, during twenty-one years of ministry in his See City, which is perhaps as difficult a field as any, he has seen our Lord gain so many souls that his faith is twenty-one times as strong as at the beginning.

When our Master burst the bonds of death, He set free an inexhaustible source of power for each one of us. For, through the Sacraments, we share in the courage and vigor of

“One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.”



### **Monday After the First Sunday After Easter**

#### **Easter Joy**

Because there was no purer or greater natural happiness, our Lord compared the joy of the Church over His Resurrection to that of a mother with her first-born babe. The Body of the Faithful must suffer the travail of witnessing His Passion first, and then it would have the unspeakable happiness of bringing Him forth at Easter. Thus dear Jesus claims to bear to us all those relationships which give us the greatest happiness. He is our Father in Holy Communion, and at all times He is our best Friend, our Brother, our Spouse, and our First-born (cp. xiii: 33; xv: 15; xx: 17; xiv: 23; xvi: 21).

This joy of Easter can never be taken away from us; even though we should be deprived of every temporal blessing, we would still have the supreme happiness of possessing Jesus and all things in Him. A vast number of men and women in all ages of the Church have deliberately renounced marriage, property, and personal liberty, saying, “I am nothing, I have nothing, and I desire nothing save only the love of Jesus.” Yet

no one of them, who was faithful to his vocation, has ever been less than supremely happy.

Our Saviour expresses the two great delights of our relation to Him as being that we see Him, and that He sees us (xiv: 19; xvi: 22). How unspeakably great must have been the rapture of a visit with the Risen Christ! And yet He looks upon each of us now with that same boundless love, and with the same joyful Smile which comforted Peter when he sees us become more penitent and devoted to Him (St. Luke xv: 10). If we would know the fulness of pleasure, we need only live in His Presence. As the sun-dial records none but sunny hours, so ought we reckon that we truly *live* only during the time we spend in the light of His Countenance.



### **Tuesday After the First Sunday After Easter**

#### ***The Joy of the New Life***

The very first act of Christ upon His return to the Church was to bestow upon her the new life which He had purchased with His Own Blood on the Cross, and had brought to her in His Risen Humanity. And the way in which He gave this, which is the priceless heritage of Christendom, indicates that He was the new "Beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. iii: 14). For as, at the early dawn of existence, "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," so now in the morning of the new creation that original endowment of eternal life, lost by the Fall, is restored, and again it is conveyed by the Sacrament of God's Breath. Through our Risen Lord there is offered to mankind a second genesis, a new world and the place of children in the very household of God (Eph. ii: 19).

But, inevitably, the first communication to souls of the new life thus committed to the Church would be to effect their reconciliation and union with God. Accordingly, the authority to forgive was explicitly conferred upon the Body of the Faithful, with full power to exercise Christ's Own Ministry of Reconciliation. "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" were the terms of the Church's commission; and they mean that she is really Jesus Christ seeking lost sinners in the world, to endow their dead souls with His gift of life. "I am the Light of the World," He said once, and again to His Church, "Ye are the Light of the World" (viii: 12; St. Matt. v: 14).

Not only has she her Lord's own authority to cleanse souls by Holy Baptism; she possesses also a remedy for the even greater iniquity which Christians commit against the Presence of Jesus within them, and against the life which He has imparted to their souls. Through her priest she speaks the word of Absolution to each contrite sinner, upon the easy condition that he tell her his faults privately, and resolve to amend. On the very promise of Christ, the burden of his guilt is instantly done away, loosed in Heaven as the gracious pardon of his Lord is pronounced on earth (St. Matt. xviii: 18). How wonderfully it proves the far-seeing love and care of our Saviour, that His first thought on His Resurrection Day was to provide a sacrament to cleanse away the stain of treason from us, His friends and brethren!



### **Wednesday After the First Sunday After Easter**

#### **Consecration by the Risen Christ**

The gift of new life imparted by our Saviour on Easter Day is to consecrate us for Him, more and

more, as it fills us. It is impossible for us to remain stationary in holiness; we must advance, or we will deteriorate. St. Bernard applies to this the saying of Job that 'Man never continueth in one stay' (xiv: 2). But there is the simplest, sweetest and most perfect of all ways for us to increase in perfection, and that is through love of Jesus Risen. Suppose we take, for example, the fault of "temper," which is the besetting sin of so many souls. The cure suggested by Holy Scripture is, "Kiss the Son" (Ps. ii: 12). At each Communion we can consecrate our lips and tongue to kind and gentle speech, and our hearts to loving thoughts.

Jesus appeared to Blessed Magdalen in the form of a gardener. Shall we not let Him cultivate in our souls the flowers of love?

"In silence and alone He rose in power,  
Even the dearest of His Own, knew not the hour.  
Even the Mother of His love might not stand by,  
Even the Angel Hosts above watched silently.

"In silence and alone Thy footsteps trod  
Earth's garden fair, which was Thine Own, O Son of God  
Come as the morning mists unroll with roseate hue,  
And in the garden of my soul make all things new."

The Resurrection life which we receive from our Saviour is the sole beauty and eternal ornament of our spirit and body. Now it lies hidden within us, except as it manifests itself in a life consecrated to Him and to our brethren; but at His coming, it shall be revealed (Rom. viii: 18). We must let Him impart it to us "more abundantly" through our spiritual life and the sacraments.

**Thursday After the First Sunday After Easter****St. Thomas Suffered to Doubt the Resurrection**

There are several possible reasons for doubt about the Faith. It may be due to the will being weak and the mind clouded by sin. A man once said to Pascal, "O, if I only believed what you believe, I would be a better man." "Begin by being a better man, and you will soon believe what I believe," the philosopher answered. St. Thomas, however, was too good a soul to conceive doubt in this way. Then, it may arise from an intellectual difficulty. But the doubting Apostle had seen Christ raise Lazarus from death, and he must have supposed that He could come forth from His Own tomb. A third cause of doubt is the fact that one cares so much; and this was the difficulty with St. Thomas. The Resurrection meant so much to him, that he was afraid it could not be so. Add to this that he was trying to puzzle out by himself the mystery of Christ's Death, and that he demanded ocular proof of the Resurrection, and we have the three most prolific sources of skepticism.

His experience reveals to us that our Risen Lord was as willing as ever to teach a soul in the way it could best receive the truth. The Cross stood plain before St. Thomas. How red and gaping were the Wounds! But through the love of our Lord, the very Marks of His Crucifixion, which had been the cause of the Apostle's despair, became the means of bringing him to the fulness of faith. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My Hands," He said to the Apostle, "and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My Side and be not faithless but believing."

St. Thomas was peculiarly well fitted to bear the

most convincing witness to the Resurrection. St. Peter was too impulsive in leaping to a conclusion, and the Apostle of Love was too devoted to our Lord for skepticism. But St. Thomas would believe only on sight. The evidence, however, convinced him so completely that he made an act of faith, which expresses the loftiest view of our Lord given in the Gospels. Even so, our failures and sins, will, if we permit, be overruled by the grace of Christ to our soul's welfare and to His glory.



### **Friday After the First Sunday After Easter**

#### **Spiritual Capital for Jesus Risen**

There is truth in the suggestion that each one of the Evangelists emphasizes a particular view of the Resurrection. St. Mark devotes himself to presenting the fact itself; St. Matthew shows the Majesty and Glory of the Risen Christ; St. Luke brings out the spiritual necessity of His Rising; and St. John teaches that the Resurrection was a touchstone of character. The truth of this last view is remarkably illustrated by the way in which St. Thomas is revealed in the light of Easter. We know him better from two brief episodes in relation to this Mystery, than we could from the biography of his whole previous life.

He had one very great virtue, sincerity. When he did not know the way which his Master was pointing out to him, he said so, frankly (xiv: 5). When he thought it certain that Jesus was going to suffer Death, he had no thought but to die with Him (xi: 16). "He will die for the love he has, but he will not affect the faith which he has not."

The one especially good quality in our character, like this virtue of sincerity in St. Thomas, is our Lord's

capital invested in us. It is the "talent" which He has loaned to us, expecting to receive it back with "usury." St. Thomas, being honest, accepted valid proof when it was offered him, and, consequently, was led to faith in three important truths, as his great confession shows: He now believed in the Resurrection, and in the Deity of Christ, and that he participated in both through possessing the Risen Jesus. Therefore he cried, "*My Lord and my God.*" Let us strive to make as great a gain this Eastertide through the principal gift which Christ has entrusted to us.



### **Saturday After the First Sunday After Easter**

#### ***The Risen Christ the Answer to Modern Errors***

One of the commonest attacks upon our Faith is the denial of our Lord's Bodily Resurrection. There are many proofs of this fundamental Christian truth, however, which our assailants have never been able to answer even to the satisfaction of one another: the empty Tomb, the apparently honest testimony of the eye witnesses, the conversion of St. Paul, and the existence of the Catholic Church, are all facts which remain inexplicable, unless Jesus rose. But let us take only the one little fact that the ancient day of worship, the Sabbath, was, at the very beginning of Christianity, changed to Sunday. If our Lord had simply consummated a Life of unparalleled holiness and love by a supreme act of Self-sacrifice on the Cross, the Apostolic Church might have adopted Friday as her "Lord's Day," but she would never have appointed Sunday. The only natural explanation of her choice is that Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

It is not too much to say, that upon the truth of the Easter Gospel depend the dignity and happiness of our human life. For the Resurrection of Jesus was the last and greatest of the "signs" by which He proved Himself to be the Christ, the Object of the Old Testament types and prophecies, and the Son of God, the Fulfiller of the hope of all mankind. Only through believing in Him can we have life that is worthy of the name (*vv.* 30 f.).

It is not to be wondered at, however, that modern paganism resents the teaching of the Resurrection. For by bursting the bonds which bound His Body in death, He showed that He was not merely "Flesh" but truly the Son of God, and this conflicts with all systems of materialism. On the other hand, He proved that His Risen Body was real and was the immortal counterpart of His Soul whereby He rebukes modern "Spiritism," with its false emphasis on the soul and its scorn of the flesh. Then, let us hold as a sacred trust for our brethren outside the Fold the saving truth of the Easter Christ.



Until Ascension Day.

Read St. John xxi

## **The Second Sunday After Easter**

### **Peace Through the Risen Lord**

Peace, like Truth, 'flourished out of the earth' at Easter. Almost the last word Jesus spoke before leaving the Upper Room on the night before His Passion was "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you," and His greeting to the Apostles, upon His return after the Resurrection, was "Peace be unto you." After He had shown them His Hands and Side

and they knew that it was indeed their Lord, Whom they had last seen hanging upon the Cross, He repeated the solemn, sweet benediction, "Peace be unto you" (xiv: 27; xx: 19, 21). He had brought them peace upon peace, the reward of His Suffering and the gift of His Resurrection.

The peace of Easter could come only through the strife of Calvary. Jesus Himself said, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" meaning that only by the Way of the Cross could He bring to His Own the blessings of His glorious Risen Life. It was the failure of the Apostles to understand this essential relation between Good Friday and Easter which led to their being unprepared for the return of their Crucified Saviour. Since they had not been able to accept His Death, they had also missed His Resurrection, for it was bound up with His Passion as one transaction of Divine Love. For Him and for us, there must be first the battle with mortal foes, and then eternal peace.

In the calm trustfulness of the Apostles, after they returned to Galilee to keep the tryst with Christ, we see how effectual the new peace had already become in their lives. They went back to their ordinary work, and waited quietly for a sign from their Lord to determine their future course (v. 3). Amid all the excitement of the first Eastertide, and their wonderful gifts of the new life, and mission, and power to reconcile and absolve, there was in their hearts the deep repose of supernatural peace. They prove to us that we can have the very peace of Jesus in the midst of confusion and uncertainty as to the future.

**Monday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

**Christ and the Church on Earth**

As our Lord stood on the shore of the Lake, His Figure dimly discernible in the half-light of the dawn, and altered by a certain strange Majesty, He was hardly nearer to the Apostles in the boat, than He is to us to-day. Where two or three of us are gathered together, there is He in the midst; He comes to our altars in the Blessed Sacrament whenever we desire, and, in His Godhead, dwells in each Christian heart. But, while He comes so very close to us, it requires loving sympathy to perceive Him. Thus, only "the disciple whom Jesus loved" recognized Him. "He was able to read in a moment by a certain sympathy with Christ the meaning" of the miraculous draught (*v. 7*). Yet, he ascribes this gift of insight, not to himself, but to his Master. His title is not a boast, here or elsewhere, but a thanksgiving for the boundless love which Jesus had bestowed upon him in giving him the power of discerning His Presence. Everyone of us is the object of that same Divine Charity, and may for the asking obtain from our Lord an increased gift of discerning Him within ourselves or under Sacramental veils.

He abides with His Church on earth and with each soul of His people, in order to provide for our salvation, even in small details. "Children," He called to the Apostles on the Lake, "have ye aught to eat"? It was the same loving care which had made Him direct that food should be given to the little daughter of Jairus, and that St. Lazarus should be loosed from the uncomfortable bands in which his body had been swathed (*St. Luke viii: 55; St. John xi: 44*).

Nor will He long deny us the supreme happiness of seeing His Face. Already the day is breaking. Surely for us the midnight of Judas' treason is past forever; we are living in the dawn of Peter's penitence, and the morning is brightening around us as we advance little by little in righteousness, toward our Saviour on the Eternal Shore.



## **Tuesday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

### *Fleeing to Christ in Contrition*

It is one of the favorite devices of the devil to lead us into sin, first, and then persuade us that since we have fallen we might as well continue indulging ourselves, or at least postpone seeking forgiveness, until our next confession or communion. In this way he deludes souls into multiplying the first fault so that God is much more dishonored, than if they had at once sought pardon for the broken resolution, or commandment. We may gain from the experience of St. Peter some valuable instruction in rejecting this evil counsel of the Tempter. When he first realized his guilt in the Eyes of his all-holy Master, he would have driven Jesus away from him, so great was his shame and suffering in the Divine Presence (St. Luke v:8). We also feel this disposition to escape from our Saviour when we have fallen into pride or anger or whatever our besetting sin may be.

He had made a great gain in true penitence, however, when we obtain a second view of his heart (vi:68). Christ had offered Himself to His Disciples as the very Bread of Heaven and many had deserted Him, in consequence. But although He made a great demand on the faith of the Apostles, also, St. Peter had

learned now that above all things he must cleave to his Master. "Lord," he declared, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." And, no matter how bad our fall should be, we must in the first moment afterward, resolve that we will hold fast to Jesus.

Dear St. Peter manifested the consummation of his training, there at the Lake, when he saw his Risen Master on the shore and swam to Him. He fully realized his need of forgiveness for his three denials, but his first thought was to reach the Feet of his Lord with all speed. Let us, after his example, rise up immediately from our fall, not even waiting for our next devotions, flee at once to Jesus, and beg His ready forgiveness.



### **Wednesday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

#### **The Joy of Holy Communion**

It is the Risen Christ Whom we receive in the Blessed Sacrament, and this fact relieves our faith in the Divine Mysteries of many of its difficulties. For His Humanity existed in a new mode after the Resurrection, so that it possessed many of the qualities of a spirit. Accordingly, when every opening of the Upper Room was tightly closed, "came Jesus and stood in the midst." He had passed through the solid wall, and was present among them even before He was visible. Then, He willed that His Body should be extended so that it would fill space and they would see Him; but He was not a whit more really there in His Manhood after He gave It extension, when they could see His Wounds and feel His Flesh and Bones, than while It remained unextended, occupying no length, or

breadth or thickness of space. In the same way, His spirit-like Humanity is present in the tiniest portion of the Blessed Sacrament.

We learn a great lesson about believing in the Holy Communion, from the doubt and the great faith of St. Thomas. He demanded and received the opportunity of thrusting His Hand into the sacred Wounds. Yet, as St. Austin observes, "he saw and touched Man and confessed God Whom he saw not nor touched." His eyes beheld the outward and visible Sign of Jesu's Manhood, but he believed in the inward, invisible Person. "In His example, it is seen that faith is not measured by sight."

One blessing we receive only when we gather about "God's Board." There alone dear Jesus is to us as a Father among His children. We observe a significant difference between the word for "little children" which He used just after Holy Communion, in the Upper Room, and that by which He addressed the Apostles on the Lake (xiii: 33; v. 5). Only the former implies the relationship of paternity toward His Own. When He has imparted to us His Own Flesh and Blood, at the Altar, we are His little children, and He is our Everlasting Father.



### **Thursday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

#### **Preparations for Holy Communion and Thanksgiving**

The principle of all external preparation for the coming of our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is that we should do our utmost, by flowers and lights and vestments, to show our reverence for Him. The spirit of the Church in this regard is the same as that which moved St. Peter to wrap his fisher's frock around him

before he appeared in the Divine Presence. Throughout the night he had kept it in his locker, for fear it should be splashed in the fishing, but now he put it on and plunged into the water. In the same way, we ought to be much more careful and generous in making the place of the Lord's feet glorious, than in adorning our house or ourselves.

Our interior preparation is even more important. As dear Peter no longer desired to walk upon the waves to Jesus, but, with mingled penitence, self-sacrifice and love, flung himself into the sea and swam to Him, so must the Christian approach Him at the Altar, with lowly contrition and devotion. Let our souls be very empty, and have a great capacity. "We go to our Communion too often with a thimbleful of faith," says a devout Bishop, "and we come back with a thimbleful of grace." Moreover, we must remember that it is for us to make up to our Lord, by our love, for the hostility of His enemies, and the coldness of the world.

After our Communion will come our thanksgiving. For if our Lord in His High-Priestly prayer thanked His Father for giving us to Him, ought not we to thank God for giving Him to us? He needed nothing; we need all things, and find all things in Him.



### **Friday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

#### **Using Grace**

It is remarkable that our Lord commanded the Apostles to bring some of the fish which they had caught, when in fact He meant to feed them with those of His own providing (*vv.* 9-12). He seems to have intended to impress upon them in this way the obligation of

using His gifts. But if He felt it necessary to teach them this in regard to a mere material thing, how greatly He must wish us to realize that we **may not** receive His precious gift of grace in vain! (cp. 2 Cor. vi: 1).

It should be our greatest anxiety, therefore, always to communicate profitably. Every opportunity or privilege is attended by the danger that by accepting it we incur increased responsibility. Saul was the worse for kingship, Balaam for the gift of prophecy, Judas for Apostleship, Simon Magus for the Holy Ghost. But, in these and similar cases, the final catastrophe is always due to the fact that, along with the blessing from God, the soul has been tolerating a habit of sin. As long as we are manfully fighting our vices, we ought to receive the Blessed Sacrament the more frequently, in proportion to our need of spiritual strength.

But not only must we serve Christ with undivided allegiance; we must use the larger measure of grace given us for some spiritual enterprise on His behalf. How great would be the value of our communions, if at each we asked for some special grace, and then strove to use it for Him until our next time to receive Him! By this method, we would very soon make a considerable profit for our Saviour in our spiritual business.

### **Saturday After the Second Sunday After Easter**

#### ***The Humility of Christ's Agents***

The Church of Christ is sent by Him out upon the troubled waters of the world to fish for men. But her angling would be as ineffectual as that of the seven disciples on the lake during their long night of failure, if He did not guide her to cast her net on the right

side. They found, only a boat's width from where they had been unsuccessfully fishing, the greatest haul of the season. And the Church, as she obeys the Holy Spirit of the Master Fisherman, is learning to let down her Gospel net in missions at home and abroad, and in the hitherto undisturbed depths of parishes, where she encloses multitudes of souls.

The individual servant of our Risen Master, like the Body of the Faithful, depends absolutely upon Him for guidance and power. St. Peter was a fisherman, by trade and lifelong habit, and was poorly equipped for the Apostolate. Yet he found that Christ could develop the fisherman into an Apostle, while the Apostle could not of himself successfully become a fisherman again. Without Jesus Christ we can do nothing.

Our Risen Master is Himself the great example of the perfect servant. How like the mother of a family He was! He had cooked the breakfast for His children before dawn; and when they shyly stood back, afraid to approach the meal in response to His invitation, "Come and dine," He took the bread and fish to them, and waited upon them with His own Hands. "To serve Him is to reign." To labor for His Kingdom, however obscurely, is to sit with Him upon the throne of the universe, for it is to share in that Love which makes the world go round.



### **The Third Sunday After Easter**

#### **The Courage of Christ's Servants**

Through the miraculous draught of fishes, our Lord taught the Apostles the great lesson of courage. Early in His Ministry He had enabled them to make a similar

catch, with the purpose of forewarning them that the Church Militant would contain unworthy Christians, and be subject to disasters, and even divisions (St. Luke v: 1 ff.). But on this occasion the net enclosed only good fish, and was not rent, nor were the boats sinking. This draught also was exactly numbered, and was safely drawn up on the shore to our Lord's Feet, whereas the other was an uncounted "multitude" of fish, which were left in the boats. Accordingly, the miracle indicated that the Apostles were to confide absolutely in the success of their ministry. For the most part, those who were taken in the net of Christ's Body would continue to be His, and would finally reach His Presence in safety.

It is remarkable that, contrary to what was His invariable custom during His Ministry, our Lord neither invoked a blessing upon the breakfast, nor gave thanks for it. Very probably He meant to impress upon the Eleven that all dominion in Heaven and earth had been given into His Hands at His Resurrection, so that they were to ascribe the Food to His Providence (St. Matt. xxviii: 18). The Church is now under the rule of her Redeemer, and He is wielding His unlimited power for the success of every one of His servants (1 Cor. xv: 25 ff.).

The food with which He fed His "children" was that which He had Himself provided. Thus He made them understand that He would satisfy the spiritual hunger of His Own, in Heaven, most of all with the joys He has prepared for those who love Him, and only in a subsidiary way by the blessed results of their ministry.

**Monday After the Third Sunday After Easter****Love the Basis of Service**

The three questions which our Lord asked St. Peter constitute, as has been well said, the "examination paper of a disciple" (*vv.* 15-18). They leave no question that what God most desires to see developing in our souls is His gift of love, and that this most dynamic virtue is the basis of our service.

Even such a saint as dear Peter was still far from perfect in Divine Charity, after years spent in the fellowship of Incarnate God. We see the slowness of his development reflected in the gradual way in which he came to deserve his glorious title, "Peter," the "Rock-man." After foretelling that he would some day fitly bear this name, our Lord rarely called him by it; the three earlier Evangelists assigned it to him ordinarily in episodes showing his love; St. John, writing after St. Peter had made the supreme sacrifice, always used it. We ordinary folk, therefore, must not despair if we find that we have yet to grow in the fundamental quality of true service.

The very first application which the "Prince of the Apostles" was to make of his love was to children. "Feed my lambs," his Master commanded. Accordingly, Christians have always considered this one of their most important duties. Are we then feeding our Lord's little ones? Or are we committing the almost universal sins against them of criticizing and praising them in their presence, punishing them in anger, and, worse than all, failing to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"? (*Eph. vi: 4.*) Let us strive to fulfill perfectly the high vocation of parents, that our sons may grow up as the dear Plant

which flourished out of the ground at Easter, and our daughters be as the immaculate Cornerstone of the Heavenly Temple (Ps. cxliv: 12).



### **Tuesday After the Third Sunday After Easter**

#### ***Pledging to Pastoral Direction***

It was a new task our Lord assigned to the fisherman, when He appointed him to be a shepherd. And we may be sure that when He commissioned St. Peter in terms of the pastoral office, rather than in those of his lifelong trade, it was with an important purpose. For souls which have been caught up "out of the deep" and brought to shore must not be thought of as fish safely landed, but as sheep requiring a shepherd.

"Tend my little sheep," was the Good Shepherd's second command to St. Peter (*v.* 16 literally translated). Souls just beginning the spiritual life, with all its problems, temptations and troubles before them, must have the direction of a wise and good pastor. And when we consider that the shepherd of our Lord's country knew every one of his charges by name, watched over it separately, fed and defended it, and bound up its wounds, we know that He expects the pastor of souls to give his loving care to their individual needs.

The third and final direction to the Apostle was, "Feed my sheep." It is important to observe that the Good Shepherd directed His minister to *feed*, rather than *tend*, these mature members of His Flock. He seems to mean that those who have in a measure learned the devout life will need rather the grace of Absolution than spiritual direction. For the purpose of pastoral guidance is to develop and train the spirit-

ual faculties of souls so that commonly they will grow to have less and less need of counsel. May the Divine Shepherd hasten the day when the tender pastoral relation shall be maintained, in love and wisdom, toward lambs, little sheep, and fully grown sheep, throughout this part of His Fold.

### **Wednesday After the Third Sunday After Easter**

#### **Lefty Aims and Modest Claims**

Our Saviour's question, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" was, as the verb shows, an appeal for Divine Charity (*agape*),—that "complete, profound, eternal" devotion, which is for God in Himself. But, even when He had asked for this a second time, St. Peter would only claim the less perfect love (*philia*), consisting in personal attachment to the God-Man through devotion to His Manhood. Always afterward, moreover, throughout his life, Peter shrank, in self-abasement, from saying that he possessed Divine Charity. He attributed it to his people, but he would never credit himself with any other love of God except his response to the tenderness of Jesus' Heart (1 St. Pet. i: 8).

Even this love for the Sacred Humanity, he attributed to himself, only on the testimony of his Master. "Thou knowest that I love Thee," he kept saying. He would not trust his own clear consciousness of devoted affection for his Saviour.

In His third question, therefore, Christ yielded to him, and asked for the less perfect charity. But this especially grieved St. Peter. For, first, the very repetitions made it seem as if Jesus did *not* know that he loved Him; secondly, he was reminded of his three denials; and, thirdly, the inquiry now was as to his

really having even the love for Christ which he had claimed. But, while he doubted whether the other Apostles would ever believe in him again, and although he would not trust himself, yet he relied absolutely upon his Master's Divine knowledge of his heart (v. 17). There are, therefore, in the episode, these lessons: we must strive to return the love of the Blessed Trinity; we must be very diffident about our having achieved perfect charity, and we must confide absolutely in the kindness of Jesus' judgment of us.



### **Thursday After the Third Sunday After Easter**

#### **Tests of Our Spirituality**

It is the unexpected which tests our whole previous spiritual progress. Thus Jesus suddenly appeared to Blessed Magdalen as a gardener, and her exact degree of development in knowledge of Him was immediately laid bare. "In another form," He joined the two going to Emmaus; like a spirit, He penetrated into the midst of the Apostles, once and again; and as a stranger He "showed Himself" to the Seven on the Lake. And the result of His coming unexpectedly upon these souls was that the spiritual progress of Cleopas and his fellow, and of Thomas, and of Peter, was at once revealed. Now, He appears to us under the disguise of sudden happenings, and our reaction upon these is usually a good, and a humbling, test of our development thus far.

For example, we are likely to discover, at such moments, how little we really trust in the ever-present Providence of God. We are like the Apostles in their slowness to credit the Resurrection. They had several times seen Christ exercise sovereign power over death;

and as Jews they knew that He would rise again at the last Day. It was not the past or future working of God, therefore, but the present, which they doubted; and so it is with us.

A very few experiments, then, will convince us that we are progressing, if at all, by steps almost invisibly small. Yet, if we are trying earnestly, we must not be discouraged. God ordinarily proceeds slowly in transforming His creatures. An observer in a Southern garden will be impressed by the series of infinitesimal gradations between a moth and a humming-bird. Perhaps this indicates the Creator's method with our souls. At least, He is very patient with us in His great charity as we painfully struggle through one conversion after another, putting off the "old man" and putting on the New.



### **Friday After the Third Sunday After Easter**

#### **Our Invisible Head**

There are many indications that the purpose of our Risen Lord's appearance on the Lake shore was to reveal truths of unique importance. For, first, the draught of fishes is the only recorded miracle wrought by Him after the Resurrection. Again, it was one of the two "Signs" which were intended primarily for the instruction of the Apostles alone (cp. St. Matt. xvii: 24-27). Finally, it was really doubled by the supernatural provision of fish and bread, and for this reason it stands quite alone in the Bible. Now, the principal lesson thus impressively introduced was the perpetual Providence of Jesus, our unseen Head.

For He was educating the Apostles to believe in His invisible Presence and power. Accordingly, He did not now show them His Wounds, so that they felt the

lack of that certainty based upon *sight* which had hitherto been granted them (*v.* 13). They, like us, must know Him now by the signs of His working with the Church.

May He teach us, as He instructed the Eleven, to realize His continual nearness, that we may have fellowship with Him as truly as the Apostles did.

“We may not climb the heavenly steeps,  
To bring the Lord Christ down ;  
In vain we search the lowest deeps,  
For him no depths can drown.

But warm, sweet, tender, even yet  
A present help is he ;  
And faith has still its Olivet,  
And love its Galilee.”



### **Saturday After the Third Sunday After Easter**

#### **The Consecration of Enthusiasm**

Our Lord said to St. Peter, “When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest.” The Apostle had, only a little before, “walked” to Him out of the surf, with his fisher’s frock “girded” about him, after his impulsive dash through the waves. Enthusiasm for his Master had made him as free as a boy in undertaking the adventure. But mingled with the youthful courage and love of his act, was his characteristic fault, self-assertion. He had ‘walked whither he would.’

Our Lord loved his fervor, wherefore He planned to purify and consecrate it. As has been rightly said, “This ardor was not useless ; it was the genuine heat which, when plunged into the chilling disappointments of life, would make veritable steel of Peter’s resolution.”

Martyrdom should be the glorious goal of the ardent Apostle's development. "When thou shalt be old," the Divine Prophet foretold to him, "thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." What though flesh and blood would shrink from the cross! He would, nevertheless, stretch out his arms to embrace it, in that day when he would give up, finally, the freedom of youth and fervor for willing slavery to the Slave of the Universe. Enthusiasm, therefore, in the young, or those of fervent temperament, is not something to be deprecated. It is one of the raw materials out of which Jesus makes steadfast, loving servants.



### **The Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **The Power of the Resurrection**

It had not lain in dear Peter's own strength to follow Christ. He had protested, once and again, that he would accompany his Master to prison and death, and then had gone on to deny Him thrice. "Thou canst not follow Me now," Incarnate Truth had warned him, before Easter; but afterward, the Divine Command was, "Follow Me!" Only in the power of the Resurrection would he be able to drink of his Lord's cup.

With the new life from the Risen Christ in his soul, his loyalty was in glorious contrast to his unfaithfulness before. Then, he had cringed before the ridicule of a housemaid, and a few domestic servants. Now, he stood forth boldly before the Sanhedrin, proud to have them take knowledge that he had been with Jesus (Acts iv: 13).

But more than this should he accomplish through the

grace of the Resurrection. As Christ by His Cross had glorified His Father, so would Peter glorify God by his death (xvii: 1; xxi: 19). Now the sheep could follow his Purchaser. "Peter could lay down his life for Christ, since Christ had laid down His Life for Peter." With that same mighty help at hand for every one of us, dare we be pusillanimous? Is there one who cannot conquer his besetting sin, and live true to his vocation, through Christ the Giver of power (cp. Phil. iv: 13)?



### **Monday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **St. Peter Dedicates His Memory to Christ**

St. Peter was remarkable, in later years, for the fidelity with which he recollected episodes of his fellowship with our Lord and applied the teaching from them to practical matters in his own life. For example, he never forgot the two angels which the holy women had seen at the head and foot of the place where the Sacred Body had lain, contemplating the mystery of the Resurrection and marvelling. They desired, he wrote long afterward, to look into the sufferings of Christ and the glory that had followed (1 St. Pet. i: 11 f.). His Epistle was written from prison to Christians on the brink of the terrible Neronian persecution. What unspeakable comfort it must have been, both to the Apostle and those he addressed, that they would have a privilege denied even to the Holy Angels, of sharing both the Passion of Christ and His Easter glory!

Again, in his exhortation to the bishops of Asia Minor, he repeats almost the very words of Christ to him at the Lakeshore (1 St. Pet. v: 1 ff.). He had always borne in mind those Divine Commands to shep-

herd his Lord's lambs and sheep, and now he urges them upon his fellow "elders," saying, "Tend the Flock of God."

Let us take St. Peter for our preceptor in this consecration of the memory. For it is probable that we shall be judged according to what we have stored in our minds. Some day these "books" will be opened (Rev. xx: 12). We must fill them now with profitable thoughts and holy recollections.



## **Tuesday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

### **Imitation of Jesus**

It is St. John, above all the other sacred writers, who shows us our obligation and privilege of being sons of God like Jesus. He himself constantly followed the model of Christ's example, even in details. Thus, his word for "children" (like the Italian "*carissimi*"), in affectionate, fatherly addresses to his people, is the same as that which his Risen Master had used (v. 5; cp. 1 St. John ii: 18). The Apostle of Love alone caught that beautiful note from the Voice of the Easter Christ.

Writing from the stone-quarries of Patmos, again, he reveals the way he was finding in his sufferings an opportunity to share "in the Kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ" (Rev. i: 9). None but he had witnessed the bearing of our Lord before the high priests and Pilate at once Divinely royal and lamb-like in meekness. In His gift was the Kingdom of God; and thus His Beloved Disciple learned for all time that the Kingdom, and patience by which it may be won, go hand in hand.

The great Easter lesson that the Head of the Church is always in her midst had sunk deep into St. John's heart. Accordingly, he markedly prefers the words for Christ's "coming," which mean, the one, "His Presence," and the other, the "Revelation" of His nearness. To our saintly Guide the great Model of God's sons is always present with the Church, and will simply be manifested visibly at His Second Advent. He would have us live so that our every action will bear the inspection of Emmanuel, God with us.



### **Wednesday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **Jesus Risen, and Mental Discipline**

Dr. Pusey saw, in the Upper Room locked and barred against the Jews, a symbol of a soul closed at the openings of the senses to all its enemies. Christ will enter such a spirit, and manifest His Risen Life to it.

Accordingly, the first step toward mental discipline is to shut out from our life the din and confusion of what Matthew Arnold calls "the howling senses." But this spiritual privacy only makes it possible for us to know Jesus Risen, and He alone establishes intellectual order within us. For He brings light, and love, and life, and these are the very conditions of thought control. How immediately, after a long night of sadness, our mind was quieted at break of day! So the Christ of Easter has shed His Radiance on our life and death. Love, even of a human person, and far more when directed to Christ, guides and purifies our mind. Just a fresh breath of life lifts us up from the dullness of

desolation or despair ; but Jesus gives life in its fulness and gives it more abundantly.

For others' sake, too, let us conserve our intellectual life for the Risen Master. Maeterlinck says, "Though you assume the face of a saint, a hero, or a martyr, the eye of the passing child will not greet you with the same unapproachable smile, if there lurk within you an evil thought." On all accounts, therefore, we must love the Lord, our God, with all our *mind*.



### **Thursday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **St. John Devoted to Truth**

So often, and so adoringly, does St. John speak of Divine Light, that some have attributed to him an even greater devotion to this attribute of God than to His Love. Especially for the revelation of truth in and through Christ, he had a jealous care ; and to this quality we owe his giving us our most complete description of Christ's Eastertide appearances, both in Jerusalem and in Galilee.

His reverence for the Word of God led him also, it seems, to add what is now the last chapter to his Gospel. A tradition had grown up, that he had been singled out by Christ for a miraculous immunity from death, forever. This was much to his honor, but it was false, and therefore, happily, he was moved to write an appendix in order to disprove it.

But perhaps there is no proof of his regard for Divine Truth so convincing as the special name he shared with his brother. For Boanerges has come to mean to us "Thunderers of Charity," but, as our Lord applied it, it more probably signified "Echoes of the Word of God," since thunder was thought of as re-

verberations of the Divine Voice. At no time in her history has the Church needed this spirit of St. John more than now, when the verities of religion are so lightly regarded. He must teach us to speak the truth in love.



### **Friday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **St John as Alter Christus**

It is of more than symbolic significance that, as Jesus was Alpha and Omega, John was the first and last of His Apostles. There was a likeness to the Saviour in the soul of the Beloved Disciple, which drew him to Christ at the very beginning, and made it appropriate for him to remain on earth after all the others, to be a living, visible, bond of love between the Lord in Heaven and His persecuted Church in the world.

From his close association with his Master, moreover, his very vocabulary and modes of expression became strikingly similar to those of Jesus. "It is sometimes even objected to this Gospel," writes a learned modern commentator, "that you cannot distinguish between the sayings of the Evangelist and the sayings of his Master. Is there any other writer who would be in the smallest danger of having his words confounded with Christ's? Is not this the strongest proof that John was in perfect sympathy with Jesus?"

He himself suggests that it was because of his intimate fellowship with our Lord that he ventured to follow also, when St. Peter was the one directed to follow Christ (*vv.* 19 f.). He hoped that a death like his Master's would be appointed for him, too, and since it seemed that the sign of willingness to give his

life was to fall in behind his Captain, he immediately did so. What perfection it will mean in us, when we think and speak under the influence of Jesus, and seek to imitate Him both in our life and death!



### **Saturday After the Fourth Sunday After Easter**

#### **St. John Abiding**

It is not only useful, but essential, that there should be different dispositions among Christ's disciples. It was quite right that there should be one who would leap into the sea and swim to his Master, and others who would remain in the boat and secure the fish. And the Church is far richer because some of her children are, like St. John, disposed to a life of thought and devotion, while others, with St. Peter, turn naturally to intense activity.

The two Apostles are frequently contrasted in Holy Writ, but nowhere more strikingly than at their first trial before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv: 5-12). St. Peter argued vigorously and boldly in their defense, while St. John remained perfectly quiet. Many of the Council had been his friends, but they now had come to the parting of the ways. For the first time the issue between his Jewish past and his Jewish world, and fidelity to Jesus, was fully and plainly presented to him. Silently he met it, and silently went out to give his decision life-long, nay, eternal, effect.

"St. Peter's was the martyrdom of death, St. John's was the martyrdom of life," says Bp. Wordsworth. Most of us will have the fate of the Beloved Disciple, and we owe our Lord special gratitude that along with

an Apostle who has shared His Cross, He has given us one in whom is reflected the Passion of His Life.



### **The Fifth Sunday After Easter**

#### **Christ's Resurrection Assuring Ours**

It was a Divine necessity that Incarnate God should rise from the dead (xx: 9). He could not be holden by the grave; His Human Soul was full of powerful life which was no sooner imparted to His Body on Easter morning than it inevitably burst the bonds of death. Moreover, from His Humanity this same irresistible energy is communicated to ours, and shall at His Coming free us forever from the grip of that enemy of His, whom at last He is to trample under His Feet (I Cor. xv: 24 ff.).

We need fulfill only one essential condition, and Christ will make over His Easter triumph to us: We must render to Him in His Church the obedience of love. "Let those that love Him," cried the sacred historian, "be as the Sun when He goeth forth in His might"; that is, "splendid, invincible, vanquishing, annihilating the darkness of the night [and] the mists of dawn" (Jud. v: 31). Let us but permit Divine Charity to have its way with us, and an Easter shall dawn, when we shall go forth out of our graves in glory like the radiance of the rising Dayspring.

Because of this sure hope, the Resurrection of Christ has absolutely changed the face of death to Christian mourners. For the conception of it as simply the sleep of the body, until its awakening in the morning of Eternal Day, originated in the Gospels (xl: 11). The first time it appears, in the whole history of our race,

is in connection with the martyrdom of St. Stephen (Acts vii:60). Indeed, the very word "cemetery" originally meant "an inn," or "rest-house," and was afterwards used for the burial-place of the Christian martyrs. Thus, since the first Easter, the Church has understood that she lays her holy dead in that dormitory of nature which Jesus loved well, until the Day breaks, and they arise in the glory and beauty of immortal health.



## **Rogation Monday**

### **A Holy Death**

Our Saviour has revealed that we can glorify God by our death (v. 19). We must, therefore, gird ourselves by regular prayer for our last battle with Satan, that we may surely win it, to the honor of "our great God and Saviour." "I was ever a fighter," once cried a brave soul, "one fight more, the last and best."

It is true, we naturally shrink from arming to that mortal strife. But lack of preparation does not postpone it. And to those who have faithfully borne the yoke of Jesus, it is but one last obedience to yield up our body into His Hands. The gladiators met Cæsar with the shout, "We who are about to die salute thee!" Cannot we be as brave and loyal warriors of the King of Love?

Often, and rightly, we are warned that Satan will desire to wreak upon us his utmost malice, in our last hour. But there is another truth for us to bear in mind for our encouragement. The Good Shepherd will also be at our bedside, and He has promised that none shall pluck out of His Hand the sheep which has heard His Voice and followed Him (x: 27 f.). There-

fore, we must look forward to our death with holy fear and constant prayer, yet with a firm confidence in Him Who shall give us the victory.



### **Rogation Tuesday**

#### **Loving the Appearing Christ**

If we were asked what is the ordinary feeling of Christians about the Second Advent of our Lord, would we not be obliged to confess that it is fear? Yet surely this seems a mean-spirited and ungrateful attitude toward Jesus Christ. There should be at least some of the Church's children who can say, with a great and tender longing, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!" Unless we are willing that He should feel unwelcome in the world He has redeemed, we must strive to increase the small group of those who "love His appearing."

There is a love "which casteth out fear," and to this every Christian must aspire. An old writer teaches us that there are in all four steps upward to it: First, in the unconverted, there is neither fear nor love. Rising above this, the soul conceives fear without love. Touched by Divine Charity, it mounts again, to a state of both fear and love. And, finally, it attains to have love without fear. Most of us are halting at the final step. Let us besiege the Heart of Jesus for the gift of perfect charity.

His Own are not to shrink from Him at His coming. The sign of the Son of Man shall appear in the sky, striking terror to the hearts of His enemies. But we shall lift up our heads at the sight, in unspeakable thankfulness and joy, for it will mean that our redemption draweth nigh.

**Rogation Wednesday****The Happiness Awaiting Us**

St. John's last word to us in his Gospel is that the sacred record contains only a tiny portion of the teaching and miracles of Christ. A complete narrative even of His human Life would be practically infinite. But if His limited revelation of Himself during His Ministry would fill more books than the world could contain, how endless must be the perfections of His Godhead! Even eternity itself will be far too brief for us to see all the ineffable beauties of His Wisdom and Love.

We ought often to encourage ourselves by the hope of immortality. If there were no greater blessing in store for us than once to have our Saviour take us in His dear Arms and give us the Kiss of Peace, it would be worth a life-time of suffering and strife. But we are to sit with Him in His Throne, to enter into His joys, and to spend eternity united to Him in the bond of perfect love.

Across the trackless ocean of the future there is a course marked out for us, by the Footsteps of Him Whose way is in the sea. Let our hearts only be set upon gaining the Harbor of His Heart, and all things, whether calms or storms, will work together for good to us.

"One ship drives east, and another west,  
With the self-same winds that blow ;  
'Tis the set of the sails and not the gales,  
That tells us the way they go.

"Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate,  
As we journey along through life ;  
'Tis the set of a soul, that decides its goal,  
And not the calm or the strife."









